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YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

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YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

X

For those who suffer nightmares, help awaits at the Silver Star Tea House, where patrons can order much more than just Darjeeling. Hiruko is a special kind of private investigator. He's a dream eater. And he'll rid you of your darkest visions...*for a price.*

MADNESS

Dreams on the menu in this volume: a childhood friendship that has lost its innocence, Kairi caught up in his own delusion, a sinister trap set for a Baku, an inn with deadly secrets, a sea of drowned memories, a mother's forgotten item, a man confined to an elevator, and Hifumi's family affairs.

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MADNESS

The Forty-Ninth Night: Madness

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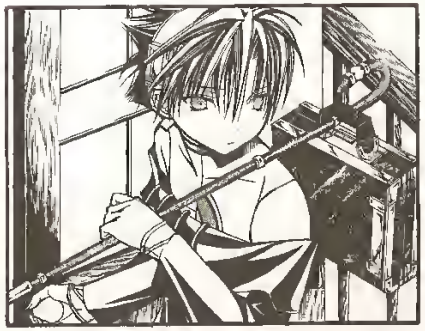
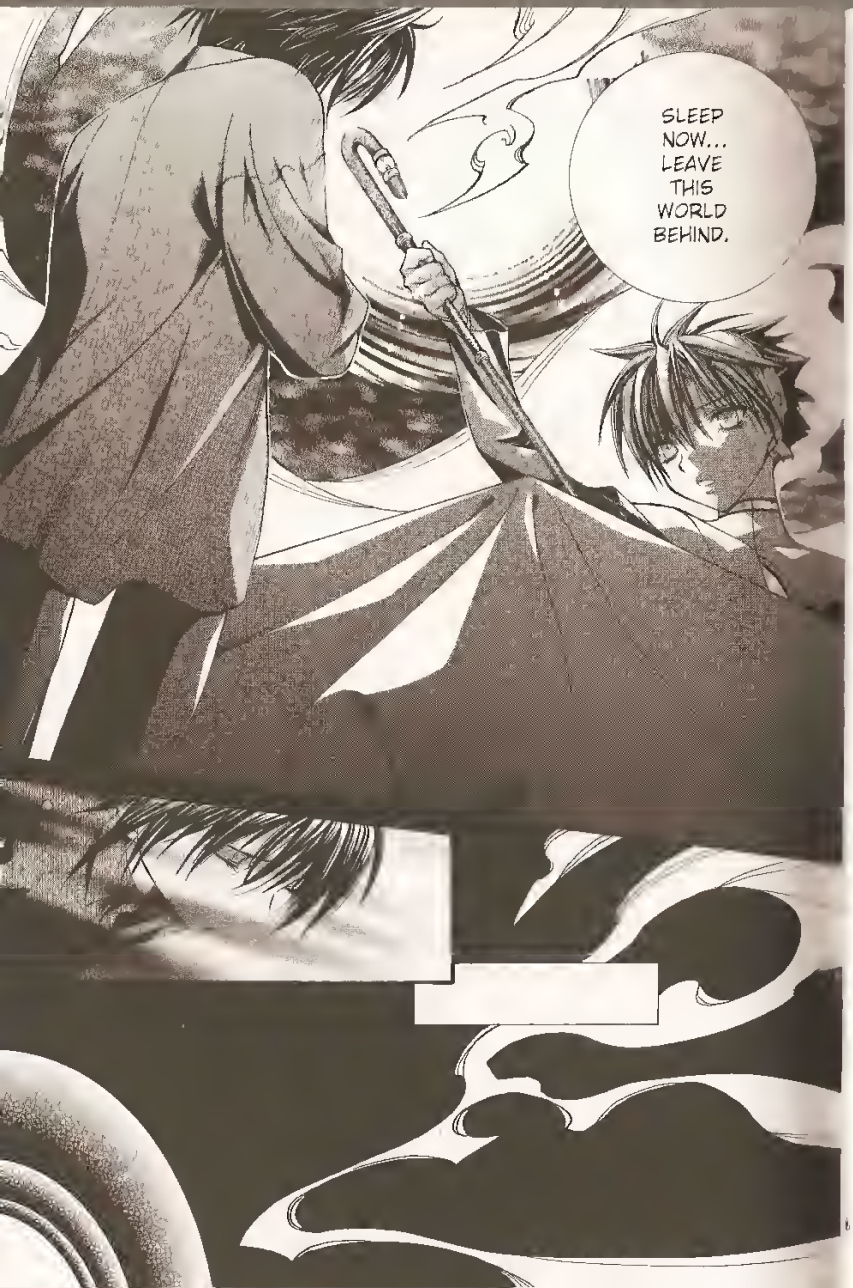
THESE APPLES LOOK DELICIOUS.
SEEKING SOLACE
UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE

WHOA!
GOOD EVENING. I'M SOUDA...

NO. THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I THINK I'LL HAVE ONE WITH BREAKFAST INSTEAD.
SHALL I PEEL ONE FOR YOU?
IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE'LL BE ANY CUSTOMERS TONIGHT.

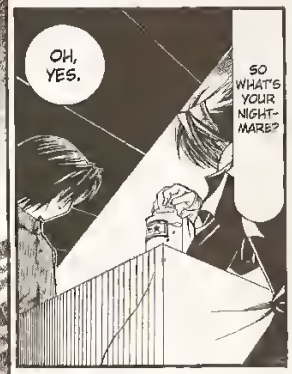
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, I HEAR THAT A LOT.
Hifumi! That's not nice!
WHEN DID HE COME IN? HE'S SO NON-DESCRIPT. I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE...




SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

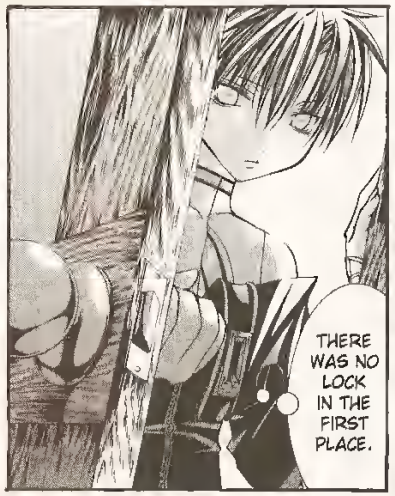
SO YOU WANT ME TO MAKE SURE THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN BY STOPPING YOU IN YOUR DREAM? WELL, ALL RIGHT.

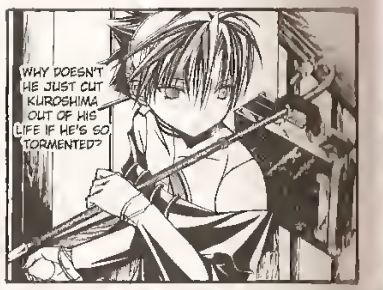
I HATE HIM SO MUCH.
IF I MEET KUROSHIMA IN MY DREAM, I MIGHT ACT UPON THIS MURDEROUS RAGE THAT'S WITHIN ME. AND THEN, WHEN I WAKE UP, I'LL DO IT IN REAL LIFE TOO...

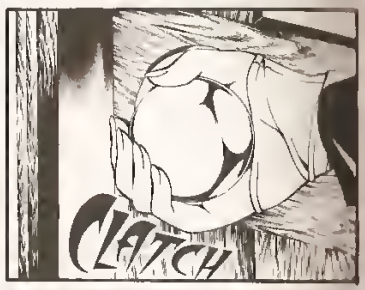

OH, YES.
SO WHAT'S YOUR NIGHT-MARE?

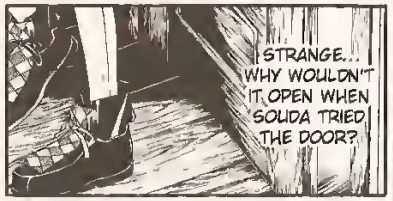
IN MY DREAM, I'M LOOKING FOR A WEAPON.
I NEED IT TO KILL MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND, KUROSHIMA...

AND NOW HE WANTS MY WATCH, THE ONLY THING I HAVE LEFT!
MY LATE GRAND-FATHER LEFT ME THIS WATCH!
HUH!
TELL ME! WHY DO YOU WANT TO KILL YOUR CHILDHOOD FRIEND?
HE'S SUCH A TYRANT. HE HARASSES ME AND ORDERS ME AROUND LIKE A SLAVE. AND HE'S TAKEN ANYTHING I'VE EVER HAD!
MY MONEY, MY POSSES-SIONS... EVEN MY LOVER!
I'VE TOLERATED EVERYTHING ELSE, BUT I WON'T LET HIM TAKE THIS!
EXACTLY!
AND THAT'S WHAT TIPPED YOU OVER THE EDGE...
THIS IS KUROSHIMA'S PLACE. HE SHOULD BE INSIDE.

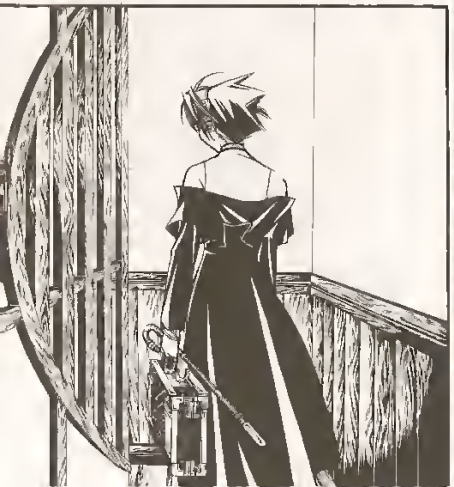

THERE WAS NO LOCK IN THE FIRST PLACE.

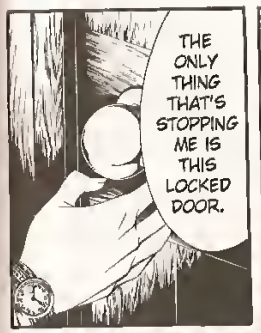

WHY DOESN'T HE JUST CUT KUROSHIMA OUT OF HIS LIFE IF HE'S SO TORMENTED?

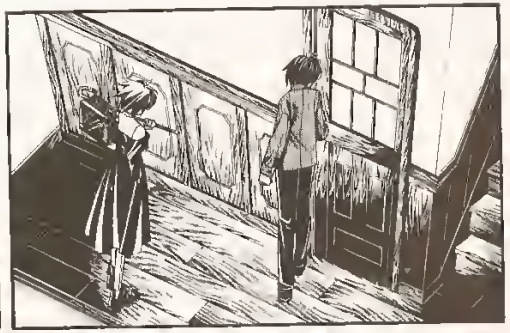

CLATCH


STRANGE... WHY WOULDN'T IT OPEN WHEN SOUDA TRIED THE DOOR?

IT OPENED!

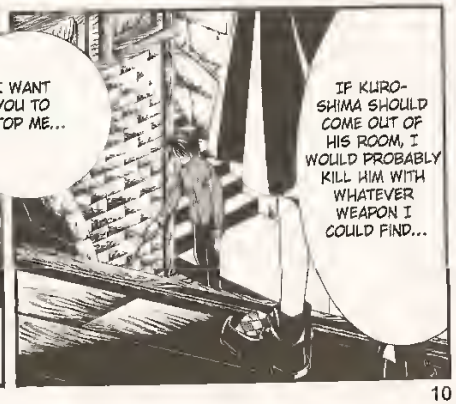



THE ONLY THING THAT'S STOPPING ME IS THIS LOCKED DOOR.

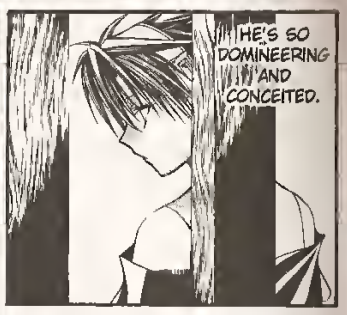


MY HATRED FOR KUROSHIMA PUSHES ME TO SEARCH FOR A WEAPON EVERY NIGHT... I CAN'T STOP MYSELF.

I WANT YOU TO STOP ME...

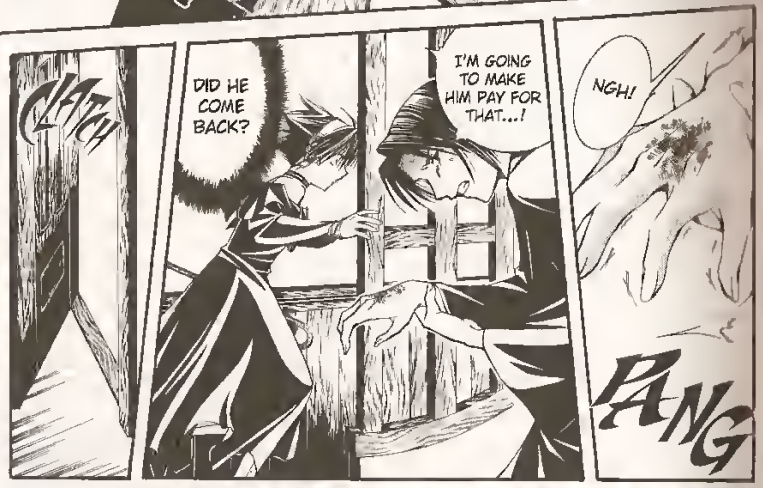

IF KUROSHIMA SHOULD COME OUT OF HIS ROOM, I WOULD PROBABLY KILL HIM WITH WHATEVER WEAPON I COULD FIND...

IT DIDN'T USED TO BE LIKE THAT. BUT HE'S SO PATHETIC. HE'S SUCH A PUSHOVER.
THAT'S WHY HE DOES WHATEVER I ASK HIM. HANGING AROUND WITH ME GIVES MEANING TO HIS LIFE.



WHICH IS EVERYTHING SOUDA IS NOT. NO WONDER HE ADMIRES HIM.

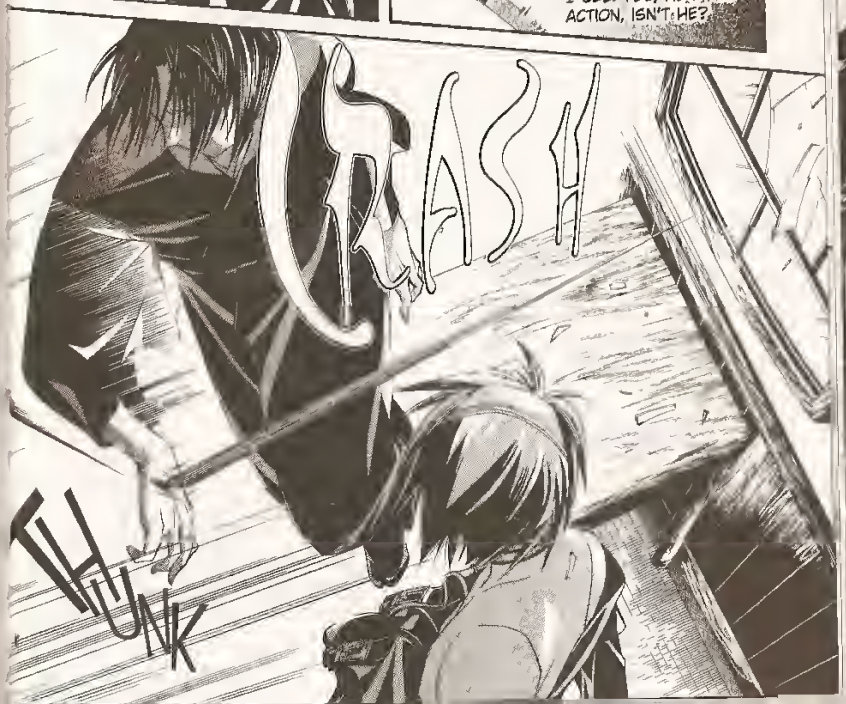
CLUNK


CLATCH
DID HE COME BACK?
I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM PAY FOR THAT...!
NGH!
BANG

THE WINDOW.

WHERE IS HE?!
THEN I WILL BE TOO...

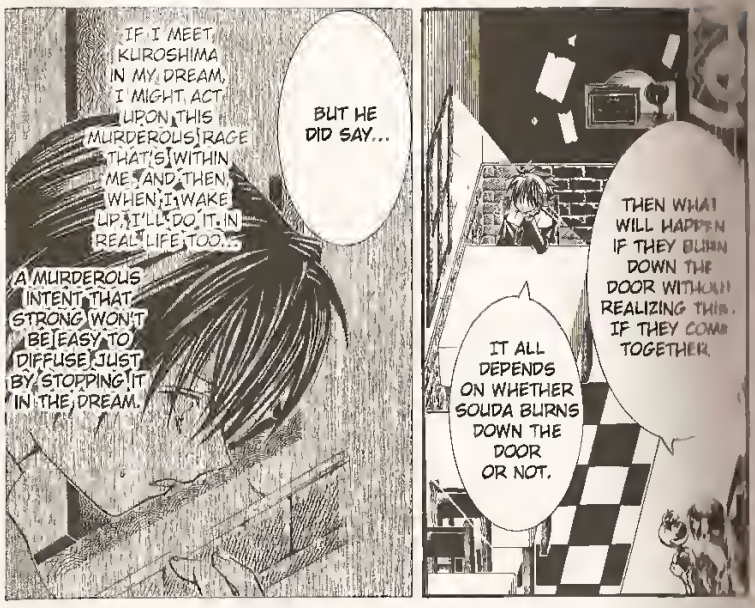
GRAB
IS THAT SOME KIND OF JOKE?!
THIS HATE HAS BEEN BUILDING INSIDE HIM FOR A LONG TIME. SO WATCH OUT.
SOUDA! THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY MY KINDNESS?!
I SEE. YES, HE'S ALL ACTION, ISN'T HE?


CRASH
THUNK

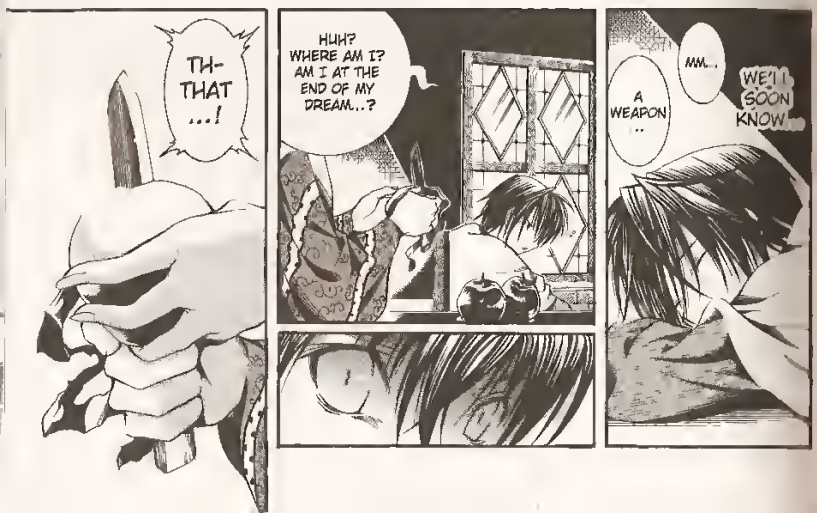
IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER TO MANIPULATE KUROSHIMA INSTEAD. HE'S SUCH A SIMPLETON.
HE'S SUCH AN IDIOT. KILLING KUROSHIMA WOULD ONLY HURT HIMSELF.
REALLY? MAYBE THAT'S WHY SOUDA SEEKS ME OUT, TO CALM DOWN.
YOU SEEM CALM, GIVEN YOUR FRIENDS' CIRCUM-STANCES.
WELL, SINCE HE'S A CHILDHOOD FRIEND, I THOUGHT I SHOULD CHECK ON HIM AT LEAST.
BUT IT'S PITIFUL WHEN I SEE HOW MUCH HE WANTS TO BE LIKE ME.
SOUDA!
YES... IF ONLY HE WAS MORE CUNNING LIKE SHIRAKAWA.
ARE YOU A FRIEND OF SOUDA'S?
I'M SHIRA-KAWA.
SOUDA HAS BEEN CONFIDING IN ME. I'VE BEEN WORRIED THAT HE'S BEEN ACTING STRANGE LATELY, SO I'M LOOKING FOR HIM.
THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE IN THIS NIGHTMARE?

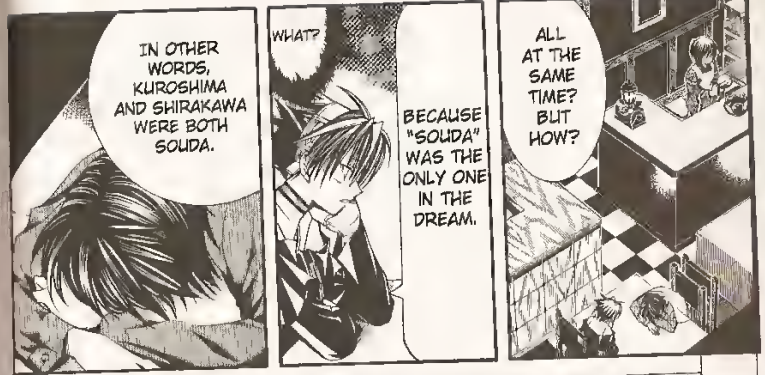
!
SOUDA!
THE WINDOW BROKE JUST NOW?!
BUT, I STILL HAVE THE CUT FROM BEFORE.
AND THE WATCH THAT WAS THROWN IN...
THEN, THIS MEANS ...!
NO. THAT'S ME.
ALL THE DIFFERENT EVENTS ARE HAPPENING AT THE SAME TIME.
YOU MUSTN'T! STOP IT!
SWISH
THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY MY KINDNESS?!
SOUDA?!
CRASH
GASP
SEVEN O'CLOCK?!

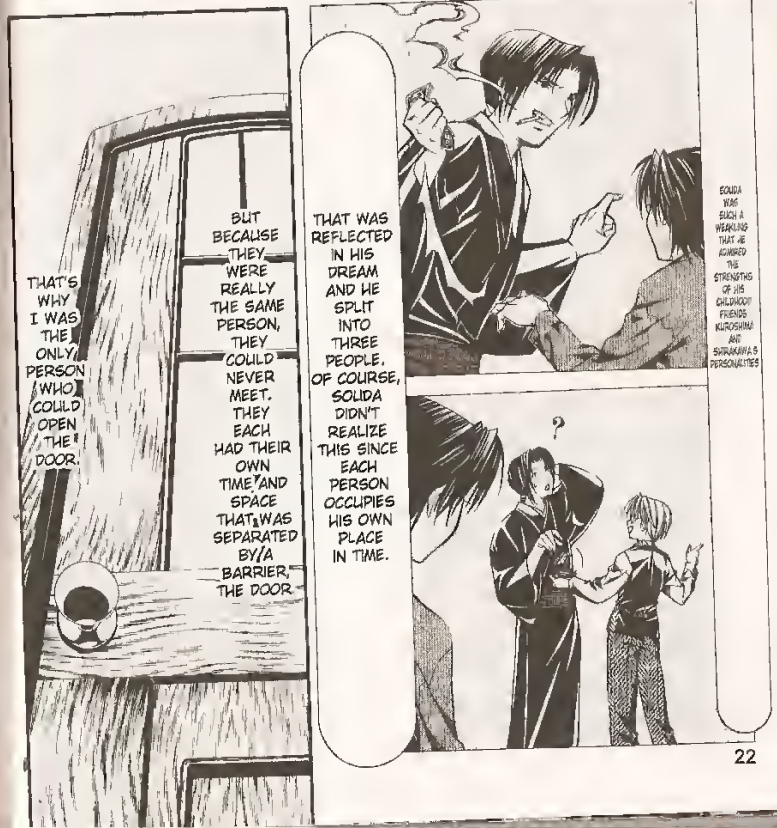
WHAT?! THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO MEET AND SPEAK WITH ALL THREE OF YOU AT EXACTLY THE SAME TIME. 6:57, TO BE PRECISE. THAT'S BECAUSE--
THAT SOUDA!
PUSH
UGH, IT WON'T OPEN...
PUSH
THERE'S NO POINT IN ME BEING IN THIS NIGHTMARE ANYMORE. I'M LEAVING.
SIGH
HE DOESN'T GET IT... I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN.
BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE HAVE TO STOP SOUDA!
I'LL LEAVE THAT UP TO YOU.
SHIRAKAWA, THAT DOOR CAN ONLY BE OPENED BY ME.
WELL, UNLESS YOU BURN IT DOWN.
BUT SOUDA IS STILL WALKING AROUND LOOKING FOR A WEAPON...
KURO-SHIMA IS CONVINCED THAT IT'S SOUDA'S DOING.
SHIRA-KAWA.
TUG
TUG
WHY WON'T IT OPEN?!


IF I MEET KUROSHIMA IN MY DREAM, I MIGHT ACT UPON THIS MURDEROUS RAGE THAT'S WITHIN ME. AND THEN, WHEN I WAKE UP, I'LL DO IT IN REAL LIFE, TOO...
A MURDEROUS INTENT THAT STRONG WON'T BE EASY TO DIFFUSE JUST BY STOPPING IT IN THE DREAM.
BUT HE DID SAY...
THEN WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THEY BURN DOWN THE DOOR WITHOUT REALIZING THIS. IF THEY COME TOGETHER.
IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHETHER SOUDA BURNS DOWN THE DOOR OR NOT.

HE MAY BECOME A MURDERER EVEN IF HE DOESN'T OPEN THE DOOR..
OR PERHAPS IT WILL END DIFFERENTLY...



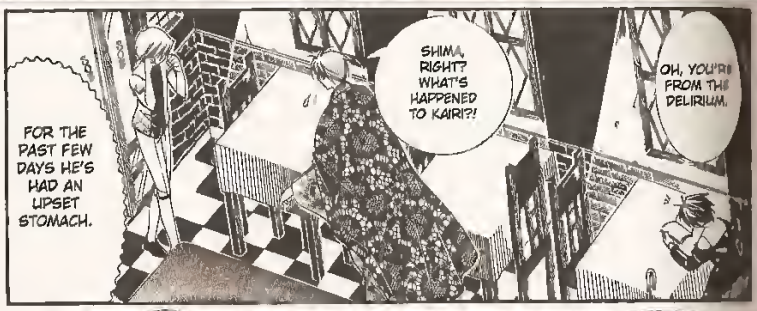

IN OTHER WORDS, KUROSHIMA AND SHIRAKAWA WERE BOTH SOUDA.
WHAT?
BECAUSE "SOUDA" WAS THE ONLY ONE IN THE DREAM.
ALL AT THE SAME TIME? BUT HOW?


THAT'S WHY I WAS THE ONLY PERSON WHO COULD OPEN THE DOOR.
BUT BECAUSE THEY WERE REALLY THE SAME PERSON, THEY COULD NEVER MEET. THEY EACH HAD THEIR OWN TIME AND SPACE THAT WAS SEPARATED BY A BARRIER, THE DOOR
THAT WAS REFLECTED IN HIS DREAM AND HE SPLIT INTO THREE PEOPLE. OF COURSE, SOUDA DIDN'T REALIZE THIS SINCE EACH PERSON OCCUPIES HIS OWN PLACE IN TIME.
SOUDA WAS SUCH A WEAKLING THAT HE ADMIRED THE STRENGTHS OF HIS CHILDHOOD FRIENDS KUROSHIMA AND SHIRAKAWA'S PERSONALITIES
?

NO, I—!
SCRATCH
SO YOU REALLY WERE GOING TO KILL ME.
HEY, SOUDA! I HEARD ALL ABOUT IT!
HUH? SO YOU WANT ME TO PUNISH YOU, EH?
HEY, LISTEN! I ONLY TOLD YOU SO THAT YOU WOULD UNDERSTAND HIS DISTRESS ...
THEN I'LL KILL YOU.
AH...
AH...
BANG
KUROSHIMA INJURED HIS RIGHT HAND, SO HE PULLED AT THE DOORKNOB WITH HIS LEFT.
...BUT IT'S ALL BEING PLAYED OUT BY SOUDA.
YANK
AH.
THEY'RE REACTING EXACTLY LIKE WHEN THEY WERE THREE PEOPLE...
SO HE DID BURN THE DOOR... AND NOW THEY'VE ALL CONVERGED.
GIVE THAT TO ME!
CARE-FUL!
KLUNK
I FINALLY FOUND IT!
EEK!
HUH? THIS ISN'T WHAT I—
?!
I DID MY PART.
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO STOP ME FROM ACTING IN REAL LIFE. I'M SCARED THAT I'M GOING TO KILL KUROSHIMA
IT'S ALREADY STARTED...
WHATEVER HAPPENS NOW IS UP TO YOU.
BONG
THIS SCENE ...
HA HA! FINALLY! I HAVE A WEAPON!
BONG

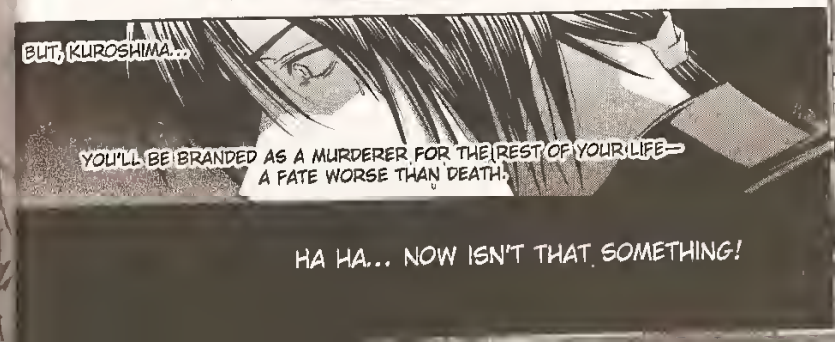
STOP IT, KURO-SHIMA!
STOP—!
NGH!
NO...! MY BODY IS MOVING BY ITSELF.
NGH!
WHAT'S WITH HIM? I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING.
HE'S PULLING THE KNIFE TOWARDS HIMSELF.
JUST GIVE UP
HEY, CALM DOWN! SOUDA IS TRYING TO RESIST YOU!
HA! I'LL ONLY HURT HIM ENOUGH SO HE REGRETS WHAT HE DID THERE'S NO POINT IN SCREWING UP MY OWN LIFE BY KILLING HIM
I'LL KILL YOU BEFORE YOU KILL ME
WHY IS MY BODY DOING THIS?!
N-NO...
IS THIS SOME KIND OF JOKE?! OH, YOU WANT TO DIE, DO YOU? THEN LET ME KILL YOU.
I WONDER WHICH IS STRONGER... HIS LEFT HAND OR HIS RIGHT?
SHIRAKAWA'S RIGHT HAND WAS PUSHING ON THE DOOR.

The Fiftieth Night: The Delirium's Owner

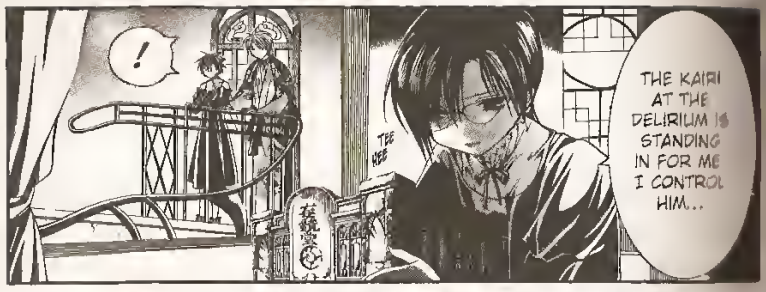


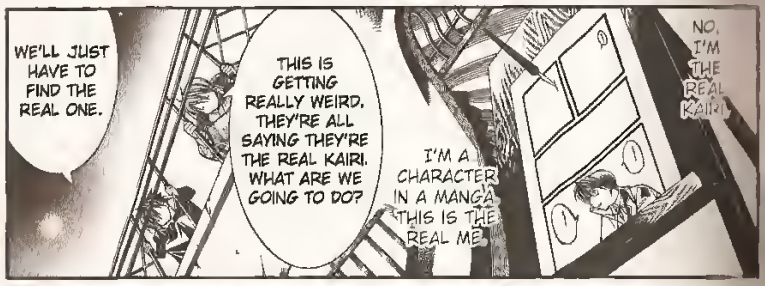
BUT IF HE'S THE OWNER, SURELY HE CAN GET OUT?
OH, THE ROOMS WHERE FANTASIES BECOME REAL...
Tee hee...
What an idiot.
HE MEANT TO GO TO THE RESTROOM, BUT HE WAS SO LOST IN HIS FANTASY THAT HE WENT INTO ONE OF THE ROOMS INSTEAD. SHOULD HE DO IT IN THERE...

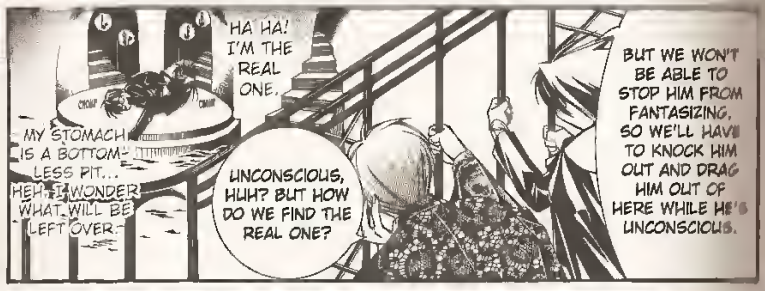
WHO KNEW...
...THE DREAM WOULD END LIKE THIS.
YOU... YOU GOTTA BELIEVE ME.
I DIDN'T ...
...
IT... IT WASN'T ME!
HE WAS PULLING MY HAND.
I SAW SOUDA TRYING TO STOP YOU. WE SHOULD GO TO THE POLICE.


BUT, KUROSHIMA...
YOU'LL BE BRANDED AS A MURDERER FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE— A FATE WORSE THAN DEATH.
HA HA... NOW ISN'T THAT SOMETHING!

IT'LL BE DANGEROUS SO YOU SHOULD WAIT HERE, SHIMA.
HE'S IN THIS ROOM.
LET'S GO, HIFUMI.
WHY'S THE WALL HERE DIFFERENT? IT SEEMS NEWER..
CREEAKKK
BUT HE'S HELPED US OUT! WE SHOULD GO SAVE HIM!
IS HE THAT DANGER-OUS?
HEH. HE'D PROBABLY LIKE THE IDEA OF BEING DESTROYED BY HIS OWN FANTASIES.
"I'LL FIX YOUR BROKEN CANE."
HELPED US...
Uh oh
BOOM
BUT HE'S THE EPITOME OF A FANTASIZER. HE DOESN'T CARE FOR REALITY. AND MORE IMPORTANTLY ...
HIS FANTASIES ARE CHAOTIC AND LIMITLESS. IF ALL OF THEM BECOME REAL, THE DISTORTION IT CREATES WILL WRECK HAVOC...
... BLOWING THE ROOM UP.
Whoops..
CLICK
YOU'RE RIGHT. WE OWE HIM ONE...

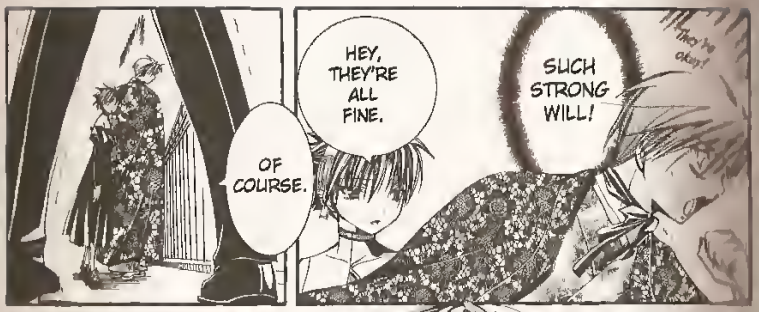

!
THE KAIRI AT THE DELIRIUM IS STANDING IN FOR ME I CONTROL HIM...


WE'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND THE REAL ONE.
THIS IS GETTING REALLY WEIRD. THEY'RE ALL SAYING THEY'RE THE REAL KAIRI. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
I'M A CHARACTER IN A MANGA. THIS IS THE REAL ME.
NO, I'M THE REAL KAIRI!


HA HA! I'M THE REAL ONE.
MY STOMACH IS A BOTTOMLESS PIT... HEH-HEH. I WONDER WHAT WILL BE LEFT OVER.
UNCONSCIOUS, HUH? BUT HOW DO WE FIND THE REAL ONE?
BUT WE WON'T BE ABLE TO STOP HIM FROM FANTASIZING, SO WE'LL HAVE TO KNOCK HIM OUT AND DRAG HIM OUT OF HERE WHILE HE'S UNCONSCIOUS.

IF HE'S THE REAL ONE, HE'LL BE IN AGONY!
I GET IT. THEN LET'S MAKE THEM ALL DRINK SOME OF THIS AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS!
WE SHOULD LOOK FOR SOMEONE WITH AN UPSET STOMACH, RIGHT?
OH, I'M THE—!

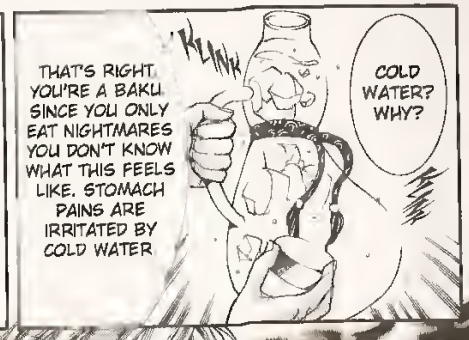
I ACTUALLY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE WORSE.
UGH. SO THIS IS KAIRI'S FANTASY... IT'S SO CHAOTIC.
It's what I'd expect from him
HEE HEE HEE...
HA HA HA...
HEE HEE...
I'M THE REAL KAIRI.
IF WE CAN GET KAIRI TO COME TO HIS SENSES, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE. BUT WHICH ONE IS HE?

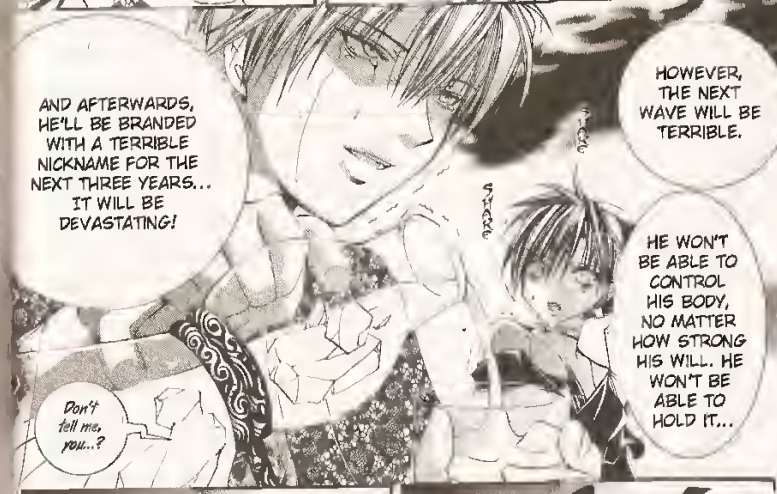

OF COURSE.
HEY, THEY'RE ALL FINE.
They're okay!
SUCH STRONG WILL!

Is that what you look like when you hold it too long?
HE'S THE ONLY ONE READYING HIMSELF WITH PAPER. HE'S THE ONLY RATIONAL ONE.
Wobble Wobble
PERHAPS THE DISTORTION OF THIS ROOM CREATED THIS RATIONAL PERSONALITY THAT WOULDN'T NORMALLY EXIST...
PAOT
PAOT
THERE IS NO REAL OR FAKE ONE.
IT'S A SHAME, BUT IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO BRING THEM ALL TO THEIR SENSES...
ALL OF THEM ARE PART OF MY CHAOTIC SELF.

WELL, AS A LAST RESORT...
RIGHT! SO WHAT DO WE DO TO GET OVER THE LAST WAVE?

THEY'VE GOTTEN OVER IT BY SHEER WILL AND COURAGE.
THE KAIRIS MANAGED TO GET OVER THE FIRST WAVES OF PAINS.
Not real waves. It's just an analogy.

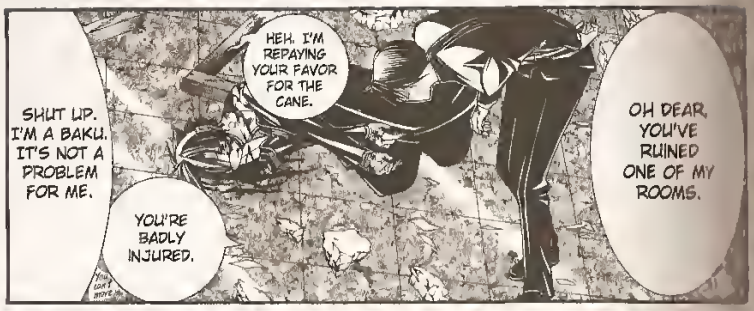

THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'RE A BAKU. SINCE YOU ONLY EAT NIGHTMARES YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS FEELS LIKE. STOMACH PAINS ARE IRRITATED BY COLD WATER
KLINK
COLD WATER? WHY?

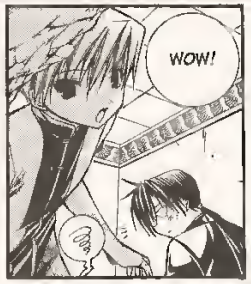

AND AFTERWARDS, HE'LL BE BRANDED WITH A TERRIBLE NICKNAME FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS... IT WILL BE DEVASTATING!
HOWEVER, THE NEXT WAVE WILL BE TERRIBLE.
HE WON'T BE ABLE TO CONTROL HIS BODY, NO MATTER HOW STRONG HIS WILL. HE WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD IT...
Don't tell me, you...?

I'M ALL RIGHT!
I'M FINE
I'M OKAY
IT'S...

GULP
AGH!
I'm going to...
O-OW!
IT'S COLD.

FWOOM
HA HA HA
HEE HEE HEE...
AGH! THE FANTASY IS GETTING BIGGER!
There's more of them!
TEEHEE
INCREDIBLE! EVEN WHEN HE'S KNOCKED OUT, HE'S FANTASIZING!
I'M THE REAL ONE
IF THIS KEEPS UP...!
KRAK
FWOOM
FWOOM
FWOOM
HIT HIM IN THE STOMACH!
AGH!!
WHOMP
UGH.
HUH...
THIS SHOULD DO IT.
THE RATIONALE HELD IT ALL IN, BUT NOW HE'S KNOCKED OUT.
THUD

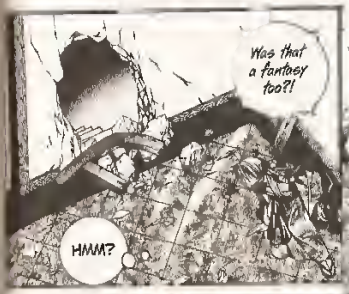

SHUT UP. I'M A BAKU. IT'S NOT A PROBLEM FOR ME.
HEH. I'M REPAYING YOUR FAVOR FOR THE CANE.
YOU'RE BADLY INJURED.
OH DEAR, YOU'VE RUINED ONE OF MY ROOMS.


WOW!

NO, FANTASIES ARE ONLY FUN BECAUSE THERE IS REALITY.
TOO BAD, EH? I BET YOU WOULD HAVE ENJOYED STAYING IN YOUR FANTASY.

WAS THERE A REASON THEY WERE HIDDEN, KAIRI?
SOMETHING NOT GOOD?!

THEY WERE HIDDEN BY THE WALL. I WONDER WHERE THEY LEAD?
I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE STAIRS HERE.


Was that a fantasy too?!
HMM?

THERE'S A HOLE IN THAT WALL NOW.

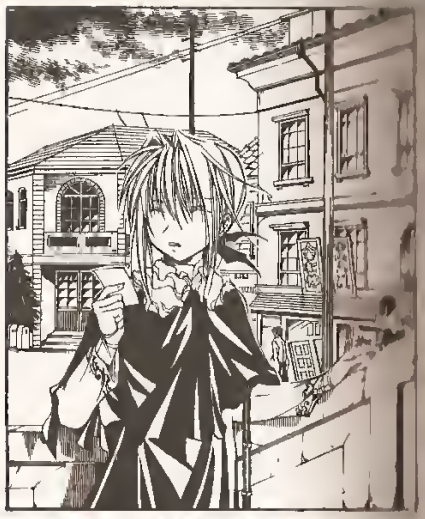
STAIRS?
...

HEY, HIRUKO. WHAT WAS THAT...?

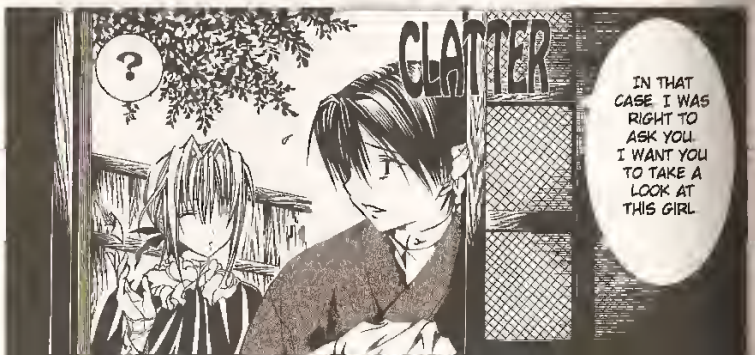
KAIRI!
UHN...
CLATTER
I see.
HIS RATIONALITY WAS LIMITING THE FANTASY. SO WHEN THAT WENT AWAY, THERE WERE NO MORE RESTRICTIONS. THE ROOM EXPLODED...

GREAT! YOU'RE BACK! DID YOU...
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

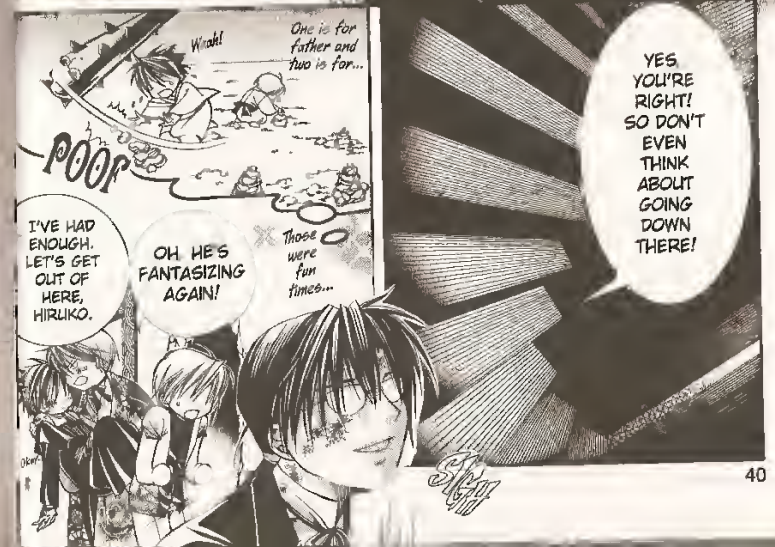
The Fifty-First Night: Flow



ARE YOU KURU? IF YOU NEED HELP WITH A NIGHTMARE, THEN YOU SHOULD GO TO THE GUY AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE. HE'S MUCH MORE SYMPATHETIC THAN I AM.
ARE YOU THE BAKU, TSUKISHIRO? THANK YOU FOR COMING.



NO LONGER NEEDED ...?
LOOK! HE'S PANICKING! MUST BE RIGHT!
WHAT IS IT?! OH, IS THERE SOMETHING EMBARRASSING YOU'RE HIDING DOWN HERE?
AH! N-NO...
IT WAS HIDDEN BECAUSE I HOPED THAT THEY WOULD NO LONGER BE NEEDED.


Waah!
One is for father and two is for...
POOF
I'VE HAD ENOUGH. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, HIRUKO.
OH, HE'S FANTASIZING AGAIN!
Those were fun times...
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT! SO DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT GOING DOWN THERE!
SIGH

IN HER SLEEP, SHE KEEPS MUMBLING, "I WANT TO GO BACK TO WHEN I WAS HEALTHY."
BUT MY SISTER DOESN'T HAVE MUCH LONGER SHE KNOWS THAT
SHE'S GIVEN UP ALL HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AND HAS NIGHTMARES EVERY NIGHT.
COUGH
COUGH
THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN TELLING HER STORIES.
SHE'S PROBABLY SUFFERING FROM HER DISEASE EVEN IN HER DREAMS
POOR IKU...
YEAH, YEAH. SO WHAT'S THE DREAM?
BUT THEY'VE STARTED TO HAVE AN EFFECT ON HER DREAMS...
COUGH
EVERY NIGHT I LIE BESIDE HER AND TELL HER STORIES THAT I MAKE UP. I CONTINUE EVEN AFTER SHE'S FALLEN ASLEEP.

SHE'S MY YOUNGER SISTER, IKU.
SHE HAS TUBERCULOSIS AND IS IN QUARANTINE. SO I'M THE ONLY PERSON WHO LOOKS AFTER HER NOW.
COUGH
COUGH
ARE YOU ALSO...?
YES... WHILE I WAS LOOKING AFTER HER, I CAUGHT IT TOO...
COUGH

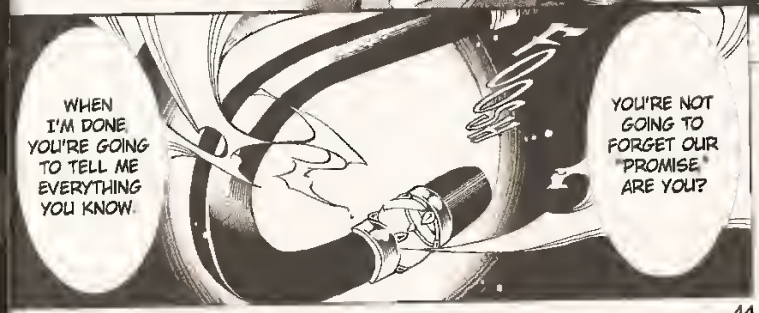
SLEEP NOW ... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND

BUT WHEN SHE WAKES UP SHE SEEMS EVEN MORE MISERABLE.
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING MISSING. WHAT IS SHE SEEKING FROM THIS DREAM?

I WANT YOU TO FIND OUT.
WELL, I SUPPOSE...

IN CONTRAST, IKU GETS BETTER.
IN THE DREAM THERE IS A FISH WITH IKU. THE FISH GETS SICK INSTEAD OF HER AND GETS WEAKER EVERY NIGHT.

AT LEAST IN HER DREAMS, I WANT HER TO HAVE A FUTURE AND BE HAPPY.


WHEN I'M DONE, YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO FORGET OUR "PROMISE," ARE YOU?

YES, THIS IS THE DREAM KURU MADE FOR ME. HE MAKES THIS FISH GET WEAKER IN MY PLACE. I WONDER WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO IT TONIGHT.
DECAYING GILLS, MEAT AND MOLARS...
LISTEN. MY BROTHER IS TELLING ANOTHER BEDTIME STORY, SO THE FISH IS CHANGING ACCORDINGLY ...
SLOSH
SLOSH
TSUKI-SHIRO ...
GOOD EVENING, I'M IKU.

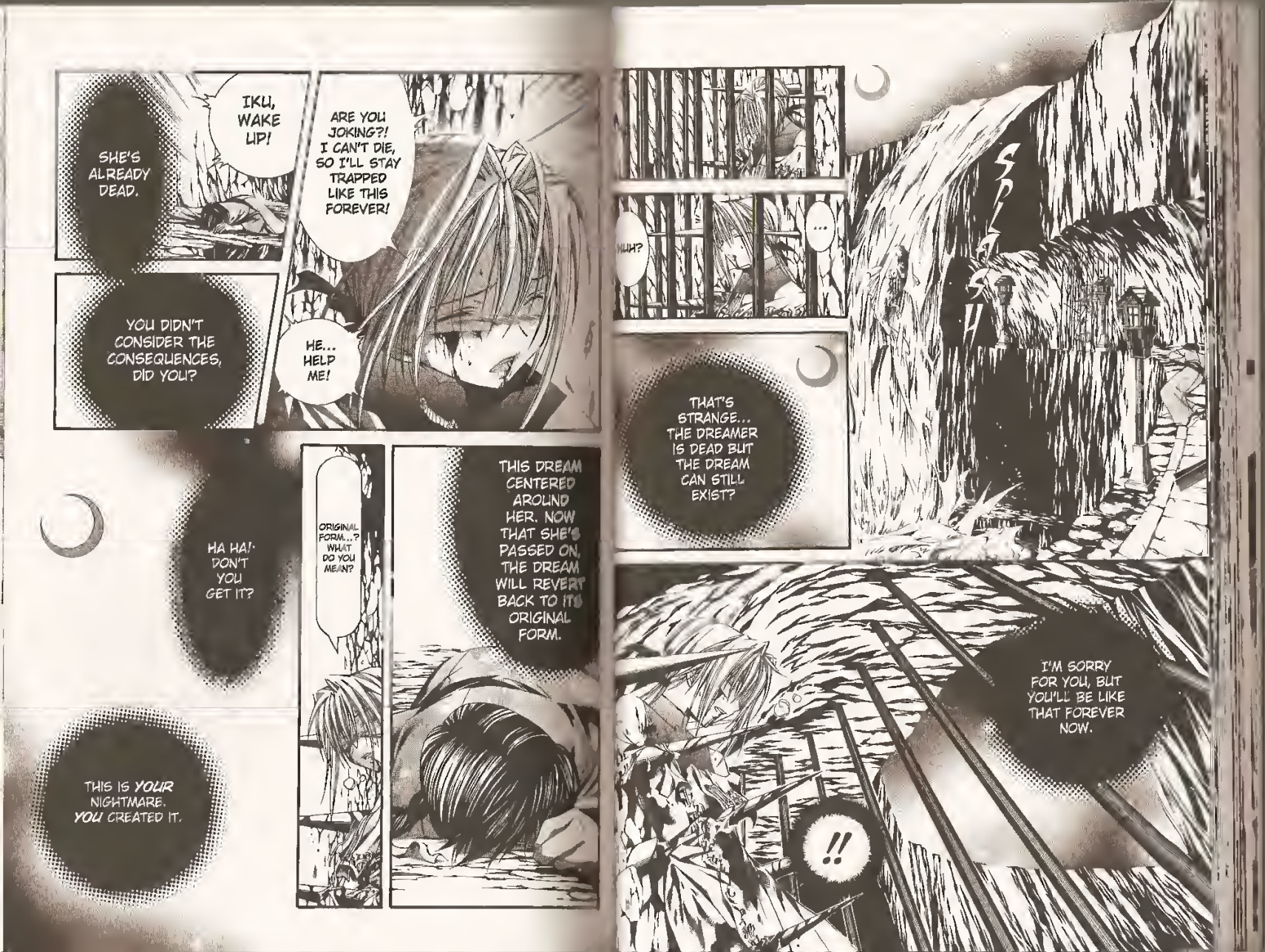
NO MATTER WHAT, I CAN'T ESCAPE DEATH... THIS IS UNBEARABLE!
SO SHE UNDERSTANDS THAT.
HA HA... NO THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE
STOP IT, KURU I CAN'T LAUGH
THIS BRIEF RESPITE FROM HER ILLNESS IS JUST MAKING HER FEEL THE PAIN OF REALITY EVEN MORE.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO SHOW ME A DREAM... HA HA.
THEN SHOW ME WHEN I WASN'T SICK.
BACK TO WHEN I WAS HEALTHY!
OF CHITOSE
IT REMINDS ME...
...OF HIM DROWNING IN THIS OWN NIGHTMARE
HEE HEE ...
THE FISH IS DEAD... AT LAST I'LL... HA HA HA!
HA... HA HA!
SHE'S LAUGHING...?
...
IT'S GOING TO DIE SOON. THEN I'LL BE COMPLETELY RELEASED FROM DEATH.
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING MISSING
WHAT IS SHE SEEKING FROM THIS DREAM?
I DON'T KNOW...
FLOP
IKU LAUGHS.

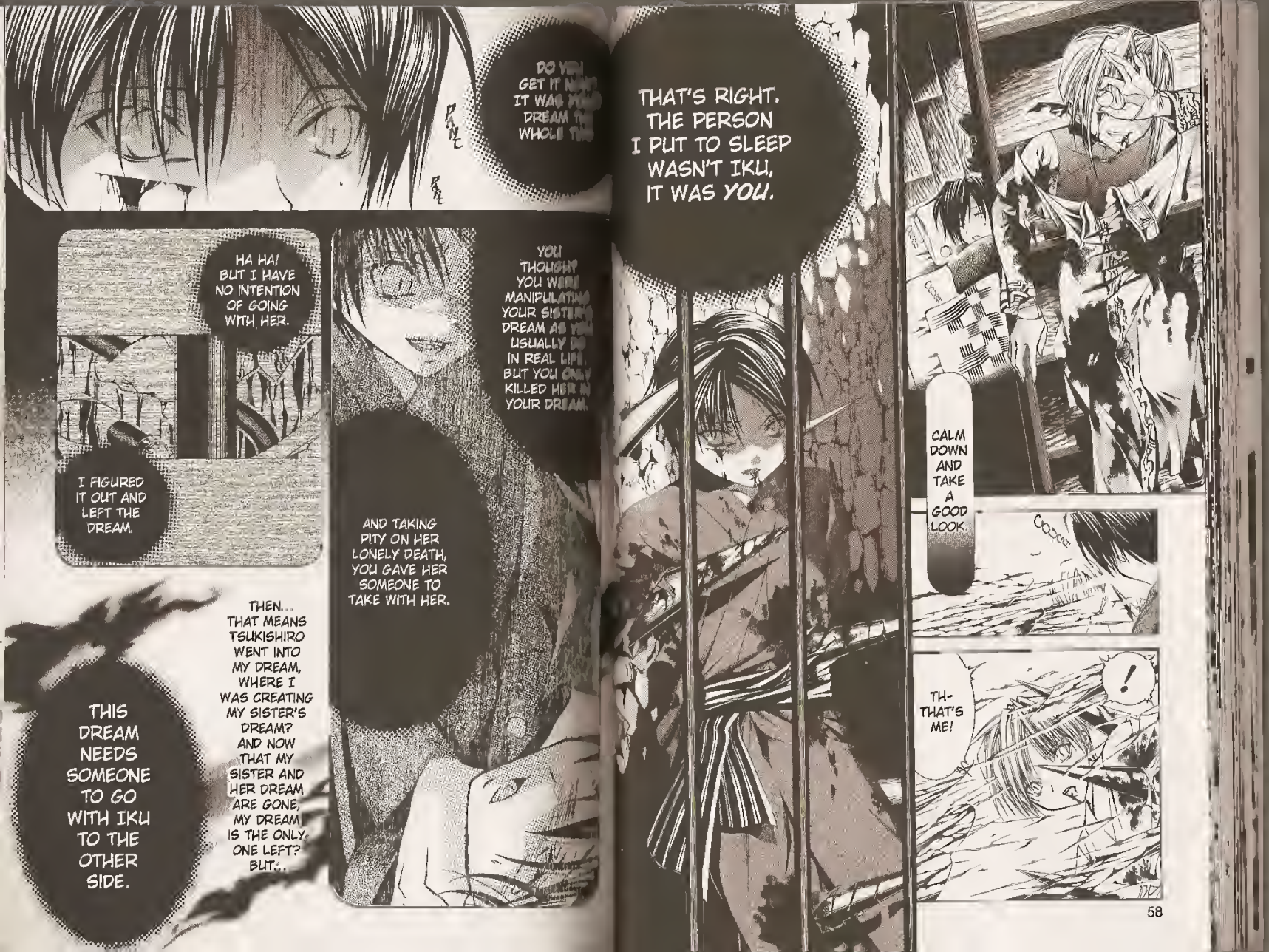
TURN BACK TIME!
ooh
SHE REJECTED KURU'S STORY
THE WATERFALL IS FLOWING BACKWARDS.
THE DREAM IS GOING BACK-WARDS.
ESS
THE FISH IS DEAD... AT LAST I'LL... HA HA HA!
LAUGHS.
IKU
!!
HA HA!
WHAT DID KURU SAY BEFORE? IT COULDN'T BE—

CLANG
IKU'S DREAM WAS KURU'S CREATION IN THE FIRST PLACE, SO SHE CAN'T CONTROL IT. ALL SHE CAN DO IS REVERSE THE ORIGINAL... WHAT A PAIN.
DECAYING GILLS, MEAT AND MOLARS...
SPLURT
THE WORDS SAID BACKWARDS HAVE FORMED A DIFFERENT MEANING.
UGH... "BEHIND ARE STAKES"... WE'RE BEHIND THE WATERFALL.

I WON'T LET YOU DIE BY YOURSELF.
SOUSOUSOU
GOODBYE, IKU...

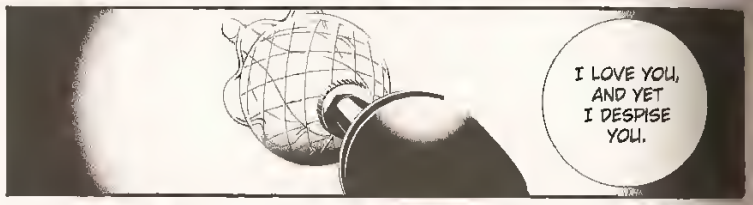
I THOUGHT YOUR CHOICE OF WORDS WAS ODD...
NOW IT MEANS, "I'M GOING TO TRAP THE BAKU IN THE NETHER WORLD."
NO MATTER WHAT DREAM YOU SHOWED YOUR SISTER, IT WASN'T GOING TO HELP HER. SO YOU DECIDED TO TRAP ME HERE SO I WOULD ACCOMPANY HER TO THE OTHER SIDE.
KURU, YOU WERE PLANNING THIS FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, WEREN'T YOU?
GRIP
WHICH MEANS AFTER THIS...
IKU WILL BE DREAMING WHEN HE DIES.
YES...
COUGH...

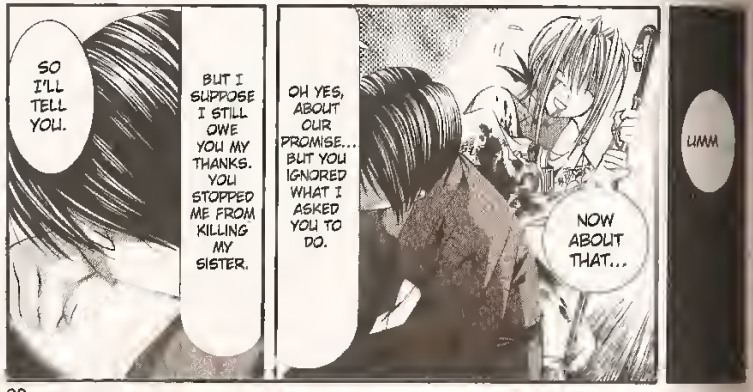

IKU, WAKE UP!
SHE'S ALREADY DEAD.
ARE YOU JOKING?! I CAN'T DIE, SO I'LL STAY TRAPPED LIKE THIS FOREVER!
HE... HELP ME!
YOU DIDN'T CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES, DID YOU?
HA HA! DON'T YOU GET IT?
THIS IS *YOUR* NIGHTMARE. *YOU* CREATED IT.
ORIGINAL FORM...? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THIS DREAM CENTERED AROUND HER. NOW THAT SHE'S PASSED ON, THE DREAM WILL REVERT BACK TO ITS ORIGINAL FORM.
...
HUH?
THAT'S STRANGE... THE DREAMER IS DEAD BUT THE DREAM CAN STILL EXIST?
SPLASH
I'M SORRY FOR YOU, BUT YOU'LL BE LIKE THAT FOREVER NOW.
!!


DO YOU GET IT NOW? IT WAS YOUR DREAM TO WHOLE TIME
HA HA! BUT I HAVE NO INTENTION OF GOING WITH HER.
I FIGURED IT OUT AND LEFT THE DREAM.
YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE MANIPULATING YOUR SISTER'S DREAM AS YOU USUALLY DO IN REAL LIFE. BUT YOU ONLY KILLED HER IN YOUR DREAM.
AND TAKING PITY ON HER LONELY DEATH, YOU GAVE HER SOMEONE TO TAKE WITH HER.
THEN... THAT MEANS TSUKISHIRO WENT INTO MY DREAM, WHERE I WAS CREATING MY SISTER'S DREAM? AND NOW THAT MY SISTER AND HER DREAM ARE GONE, MY DREAM IS THE ONLY ONE LEFT? BUT...
THIS DREAM NEEDS SOMEONE TO GO WITH IKU TO THE OTHER SIDE.
THAT'S RIGHT. THE PERSON I PUT TO SLEEP WASN'T IKU, IT WAS *YOU*.
CALM DOWN AND TAKE A GOOD LOOK.
TH-THAT'S ME!
!

HEH
HEH
HEH
WELL, SERVES YOU RIGHT. AFTER ALL, THAT WAS WHAT YOU WERE PLANNING FOR ME.
BUT IT'S NICE TO LOOK AT, EH?
...
DON'T WORRY. NOW THAT YOU'RE AWAKE, IT'S NOT CONNECTED TO YOU.
IS... IS THAT MY NIGHTMARE...? THEN...
I'VE SWITCHED PLACES WITH TSUKI-SHIRO!
AND SINCE I'M NOT THERE ANYMORE, THE DREAM HAS REVERTED BACK TO YOU, ITS OWNER.
PLEASE! HELP ME!
I CAN'T BE LEFT LIKE THIS...
HEH HEH ...
IF I WANTED TO, I COULD EAT THE DREAM.
PLEASE!

BUT.
AS LONG
I CAN STI
MOVE, I
KEEP LOOK
AFTER HE

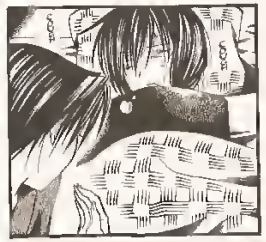

I LOVE YOU, AND YET I DESPISE YOU.


SO I'LL TELL YOU.
BUT I SUPPOSE I STILL OWE YOU MY THANKS. YOU STOPPED ME FROM KILLING MY SISTER.
OH YES, ABOUT OUR PROMISE... BUT YOU IGNORED WHAT I ASKED YOU TO DO.
NOW ABOUT THAT...
UMM

NO REASON. AFTER HEARING ABOUT IKU'S DREAM, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE EASIER TO TAMPER WITH YOURS.
THE CONTENTS WERE THE SAME ANYWAY.
HOW EVIL...

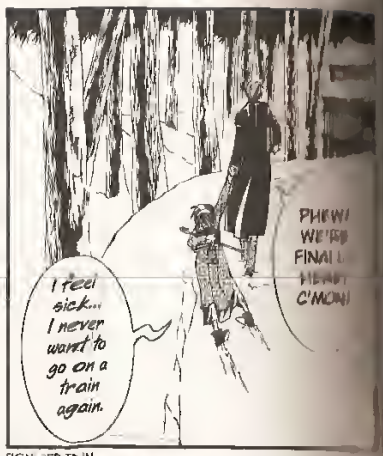
WHY...?
I ASKED YOU TO LOOK AT MY SISTER'S DREAM, SO WHY DID YOU GO INTO MINE...?

I LOVED MY SISTER FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART... AND YET I LOATHED HER.
I CAUGHT HER DISEASE AND SAID I MADE UP THIS DREAM FOR HER SAKE...

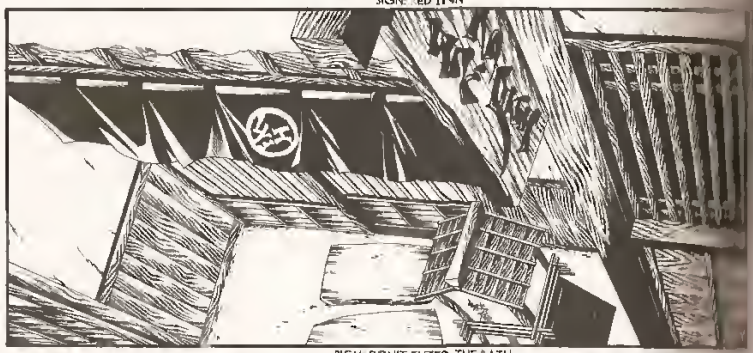


BUT BECAUSE OF IT, I NOW KNOW WHAT A HYPOCRITE I AM.

THE FIFTY-SECOND NIGHT: THE INN



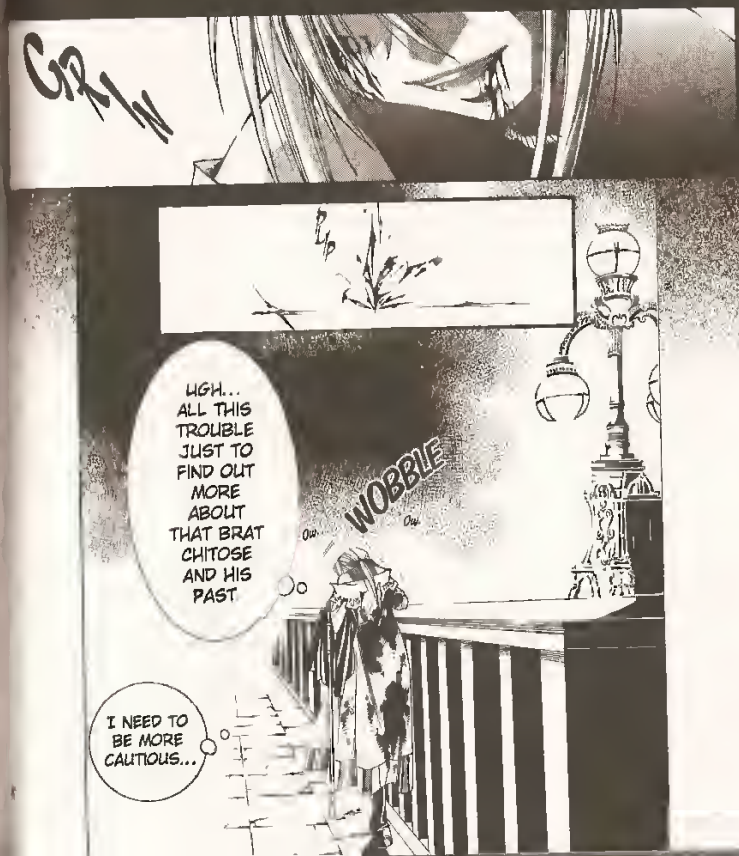
SIGN: RED INN



SIGN: DON'T ENTER THE BATH

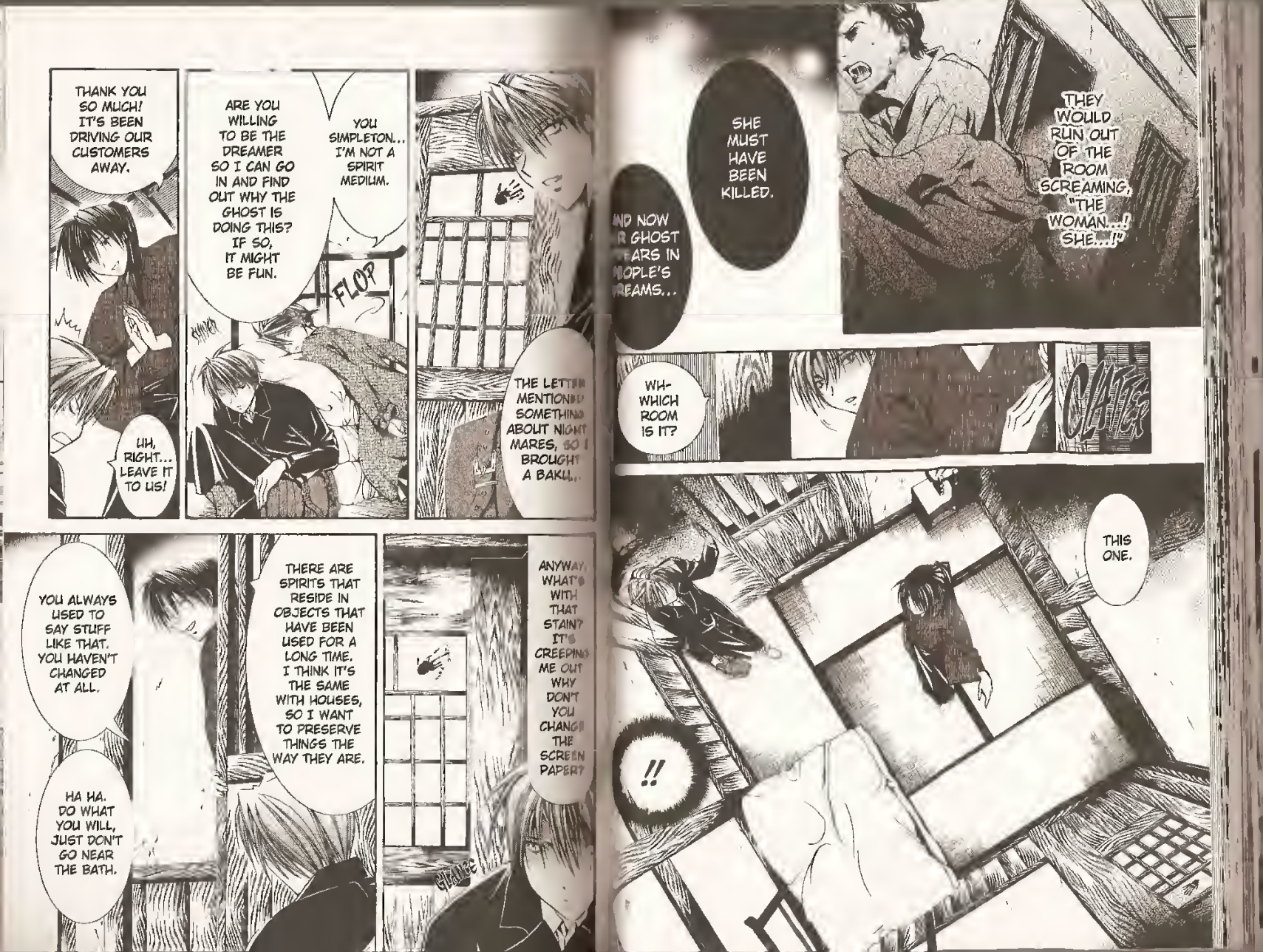
I'LL TELL YOU WHERE YOU CAN FIND AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE—

SOMEONE WHO KNOWS KUROSU.



YOU'LL BE STAYING HERE, RIGHT? THIS IS MY ROOM AND TO THE RIGHT IS THE BATH...
入浴不可
SIGN: DON'T ENTER THE BATH
THIS INN HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN IN MY FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS SO I HAVE TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT!
I THINK YOU'D BE GREAT AT IT.
WHAT A STRANGE LAYOUT
BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING THERE... A GHOST...
BATH
4 1
5 2
6 3
I PUT OUT BATHING TUBS.
WHY?
ARGHHH! I WAS SO LOOKING FORWARD TO IT! WHY?!
入浴不可
EVER SINCE, ANY GUESTS WHO STAYED IN A PARTICULAR ROOM WOULD HAVE NIGHTMARES.
WE HAD TO SHUTTER THE INN AT ONE POINT BECAUSE OF THE SCANDAL.
THREE YEARS AGO A YOUNG WOMAN SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED HERE.
ALL THAT REMAINED OF HER WERE HER SLIPPERS BY THE BATH...

MY DEAR FRIEND SENSHI! I HAD HEARD THAT YOU TOOK OVER YOUR FAMILY INN. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? I GOT A LETTER FROM YOUR LITTLE SISTER ASKING ME TO CHECK ON YOU. SHE WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE GRADUATION, RIGHT?
POOF
NO, THAT'S CHIYO. I'M JUST LOOKING AFTER HER.
HEY! IS THAT YOUR KID?!
WOW! SO YOU'RE THE OWNER OF AN INN NOW...


THANK YOU SO MUCH! IT'S BEEN DRIVING OUR CUSTOMERS AWAY.
UH, RIGHT... LEAVE IT TO US!
ARE YOU WILLING TO BE THE DREAMER SO I CAN GO IN AND FIND OUT WHY THE GHOST IS DOING THIS? IF SO, IT MIGHT BE FUN.
YOU SIMPLETON... I'M NOT A SPIRIT MEDIUM.
FLOP
THE LETTER MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT NIGHT MARES, SO I BROUGHT A BAKU..
YOU ALWAYS USED TO SAY STUFF LIKE THAT. YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
HA HA. DO WHAT YOU WILL, JUST DON'T GO NEAR THE BATH.
THERE ARE SPIRITS THAT RESIDE IN OBJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN USED FOR A LONG TIME. I THINK IT'S THE SAME WITH HOUSES, SO I WANT TO PRESERVE THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE.
ANYWAY, WHAT'S WITH THAT STAIN? IT'S CREEPING ME OUT WHY DON'T YOU CHANGE THE SCREEN PAPER?
CLANG
AND NOW R GHOST ARS IN OPLE'S REAMS...
SHE MUST HAVE BEEN KILLED.
THEY WOULD RUN OUT OF THE ROOM SCREAMING, "THE WOMAN...! SHE...!"
WH- WHICH ROOM IS IT?
CATCH
!!
THIS ONE.

COME
WAKE
HIRU
THEY NEVER FOUND HER BODY.
"A YOUNG WOMAN DISAPPEARED... SHE MUST HAVE BEEN KILLED."
"PLEASE FIND MY MOTHER..."
COULD IT BE, THAT BEHIND HERE...
WUFF
HUFF
AT THIS RATE THE GHOST WILL...
HUHU
HEY, YOU'RE NOT MAKING ME SEE THE NIGHTMARE ALL BY MYSELF, ARE YOU?
ZZZ
THIS IS BAD...
GROWL
SHEESH! AND HIRUKO IS ALREADY ASLEEP...
WHAT'S WITH HIM? HE DIDN'T EVEN GIVE US DINNER.
HEY, WAKE UP. I'M SLEEPY TOO.
PLEASE FIND MY MOTHER...
OH, THAT WAS CLOSE. I ALMOST FELL ASLEEP.
HUH? A CHILD'S VOICE...
WAS I IMAGINING IT?
JOLT
WHO'S THAT ?!

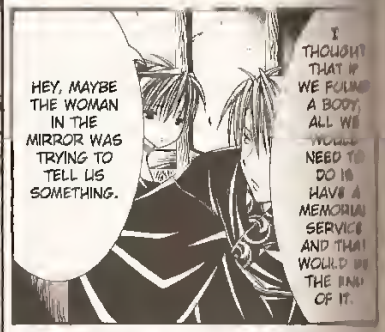
HIRUKO, GET UP! LET'S GO INVESTIGATE!
THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE BATHROOM?!
SHAKE
SHAKE
Hm.
THAT STAIN IS WHERE THE BATH IS..
"ALL THAT REMAINED OF HER WERE HER SLIPPERS BY THE BATH."
SWIPE
MMM..
I THINK WE CAN FIND OUT SOME
UGH!
WHACK
THIS IS FOR SENSHI AFTER ALL!
CREAK
FINE! I'LL GO ON MY OWN!
CLAMP
MMM
MMM
!
AGH!
...SHE WAS BEATEN?
THEY'RE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SCREEN.. IT'S SHOWING THROUGH BECAUSE OF THE LIGHT.
IS THIS... A DIA-GRAM?
WHERE DID I--?
OH! IT'S A MAP OF THIS INN!
BATH
4
1
5
2
6
3
IT'S EXACTLY THE SAME!
WHA... WHAT THE?
THOSE RED MARKINGS ...

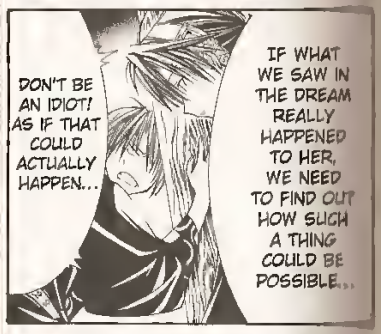
?!
THE WOMAN IN MY MEMORIES
WHAT HAPPENED TO HER THREE YEARS AGO?
SPLASH
RIP
SIGN: DON'T ENTER THE BATH

UGH!
HIFUMI!
THIS IS...
COUGH COUGH
TIME TO WAKE UP.

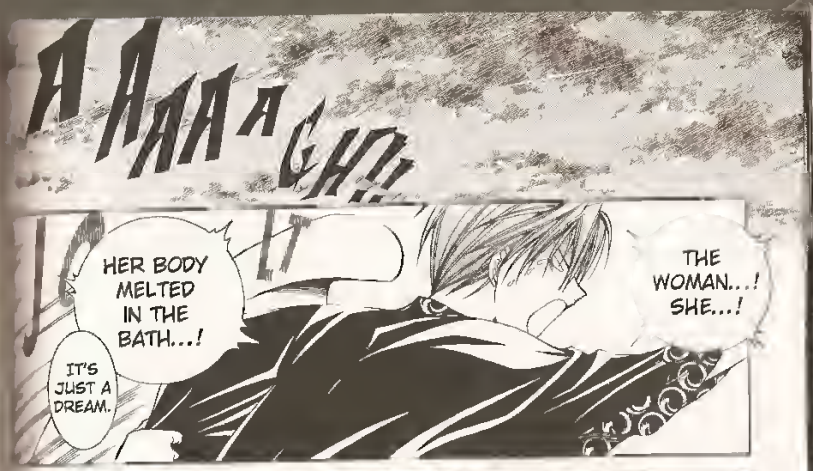
UGH...
AH!
WHAT IS THIS?!
MY BODY IS MELTING ...!
THIS ISN'T WATER!
AAAAGHH!
MY LEGS... MY LEGS! S-SOME-BODY... HELP ME!

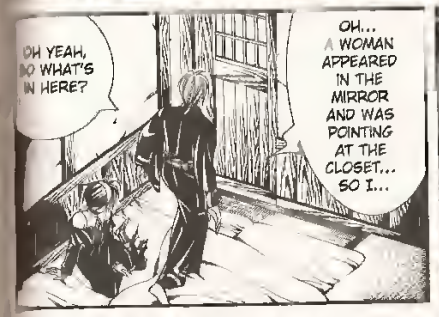
BLOOD...! IN THE SHAPE OF A HUMAN BODY!


HEY, MAYBE THE WOMAN IN THE MIRROR WAS TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING.
I THOUGHT THAT IF WE FOUND A BODY, ALL WE WOULD NEED TO DO IS HAVE A MEMORIAL SERVICE AND THAT WOULD BE THE END OF IT.


DON'T BE AN IDIOT! AS IF THAT COULD ACTUALLY HAPPEN...
IF WHAT WE SAW IN THE DREAM REALLY HAPPENED TO HER, WE NEED TO FIND OUT HOW SUCH A THING COULD BE POSSIBLE...

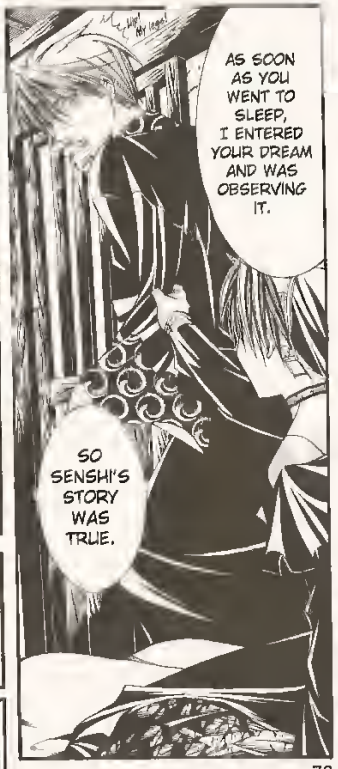
...


AAAAAGH!!
HER BODY MELTED IN THE BATH...!
IT'S JUST A DREAM.
THE WOMAN...! SHE...!

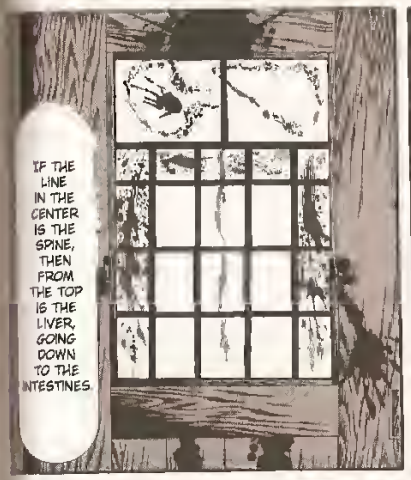

OH YEAH, SO WHAT'S IN HERE?
OH... A WOMAN APPEARED IN THE MIRROR AND WAS POINTING AT THE CLOSET... SO I...

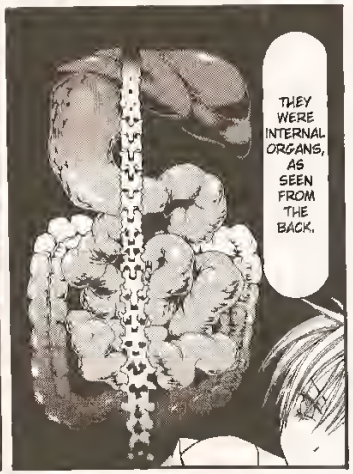
THIS WAS HOLDING IT SHUT.
CLICK

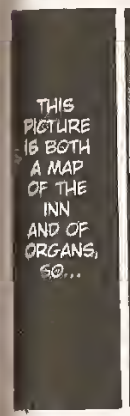
GULP
CLATTER


AS SOON AS YOU WENT TO SLEEP, I ENTERED YOUR DREAM AND WAS OBSERVING IT.
SO SENSHI'S STORY WAS TRUE.

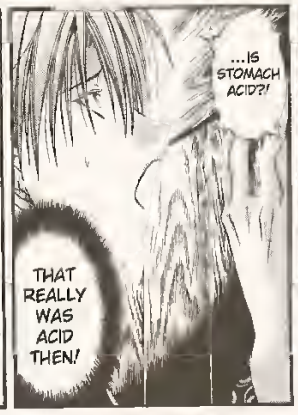
YES.
THEN THE MARKINGS ON THE SCREEN...


IF THE LINE IN THE CENTER IS THE SPINE, THEN FROM THE TOP IS THE LIVER, GOING DOWN TO THE INTESTINES.


THEY WERE INTERNAL ORGANS, AS SEEN FROM THE BACK.

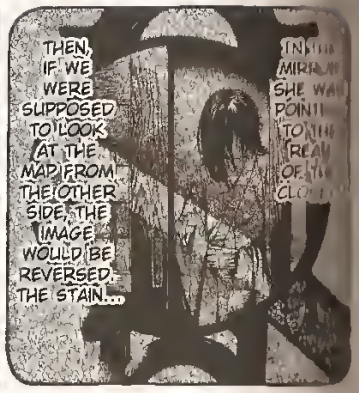

THIS PICTURE IS BOTH A MAP OF THE INN AND OF ORGANS, SO...

BUT WHY IS THERE A BATH FULL OF ACID?
WHY WOULD SENSHI LEAVE IT LIKE THAT AND NOT SAY ANY-THING?
GASP

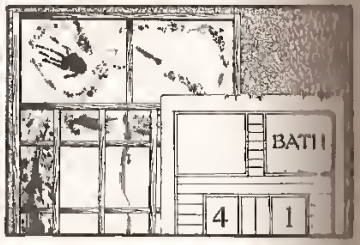

...IS STOMACH ACID?!
THAT REALLY WAS ACID THEN!

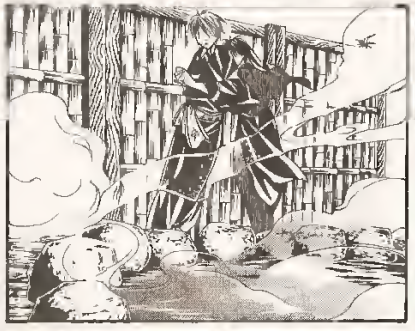
THE STAIN WHERE THE BATH IS WOULD BE THE STOMACH.
THEN WHAT THE PICTURE IS TELLING US, IS THAT THE BATHWATER..

...WOULD INDICATE SENSHI'S ROOM!


THEN, IF WE WERE SUPPOSED TO LOOK AT THE MAP FROM THE OTHER SIDE, THE IMAGE WOULD BE REVERSED. THE STAIN...
IN THE MIRROR SHE WAS POINTING TO THE REAR OF THE CLOSET.

COME WITH ME!
HAH

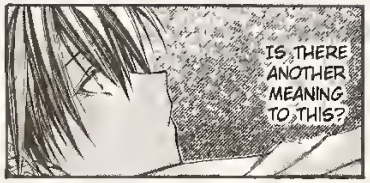

BATH
4
1

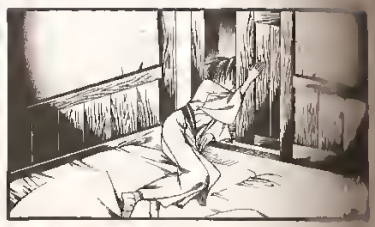


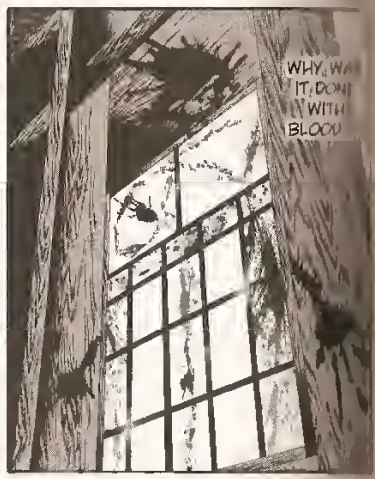
RIP
BANG

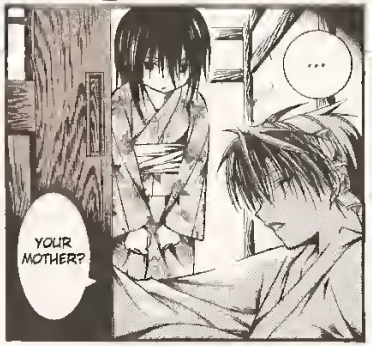
IT REALLY IS ACID.

FSST

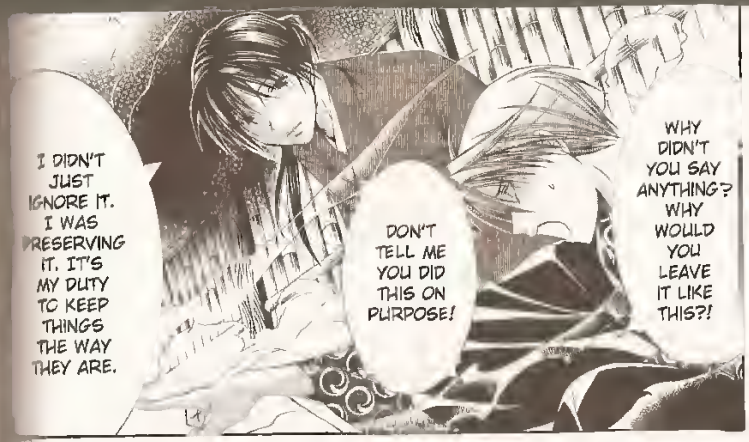




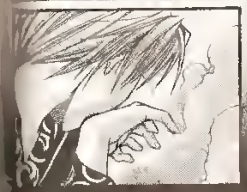




WAS IT HER MOTHER WHO...


I DIDN'T JUST IGNORE IT. I WAS PRESERVING IT. IT'S MY DUTY TO KEEP THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE.
DON'T TELL ME YOU DID THIS ON PURPOSE!
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY ANYTHING? WHY WOULD YOU LEAVE IT LIKE THIS?!

IT'S NO GOOD... HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.



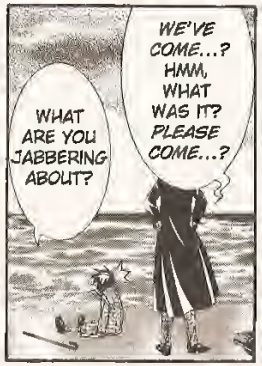
GOODBYE...

SENSHI, WE RESOLVED THE GHOST PROBLEM IF YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE, SLEEP IN THE ROOM YOURSELF...

IT WAS ALL BECAUSE HE LOVED THE INN SO MUCH.
THE LOVE FOR THIS INN THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS GAVE BIRTH TO SOMETHING...
THUD
THIS IS RIDICULOUS!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND NOW?
"THE IMAGE WOULD BE REVERSED. THE STAIN... WOULD INDICATE SENSHI'S ROOM!"
BATH
4
1
ONE WAS A HINT OF WHAT SHE WOULD DIE.
"SO I WANT TO PRESERVE THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE."
"THERE ARE SPIRITS THAT RESIDE IN OBJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN USED FOR A LONG TIME. I THINK IT'S THE SAME WITH HOUSES..
IT IS REFERRING TO THIS INN, WHICH HAS BECOME A LIVING THING.
POOF
IT BREATHES, HAS ORGANS, AND EVEN HAS STOMACH ACID. YES, SHE...
IT'S JUST WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE— A PERSON PAINTED IN BLOOD... THAT REPRESENTS A RED HOUSE.
THE LAST WAS A HINT OF THE ROOT OF THE EVIL.
HEH HEH THERE'S NO POINT IN REGRETTING ANYTHING. HE'S FALLEN INTO A NIGHTMARE HE'LL NEVER WAKE UP FROM.
SOME FRIEND I AM...
IN REALITY, NOTHING WAS RESOLVED...
DON'T TELL ME THIS IS RIDICULOUS, BUT...
I GAVE UP ON SENSHI...
CHIYO IS PROBABLY SENSHI'S DAUGHTER. SO THE GHOST IS ACTUALLY HIS WIFE.
"THE STAIN IS WHERE THE BATH IS..."
ONE WAS A HINT OF HOW SHE WOULD DIE.
"THIS 'ISN'T WATER' MY BODY IS UNABLE TO..."
THE MARKS SHE MADE WITH HER BLOOD ACTUALLY EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.
THREE YEARS AGO SHE WAS TRAPPED IN THAT INN. TO SAVE HER CHILD, SHE PROBABLY HID IN THE CLOSET WHEN SHE GAVE BIRTH...

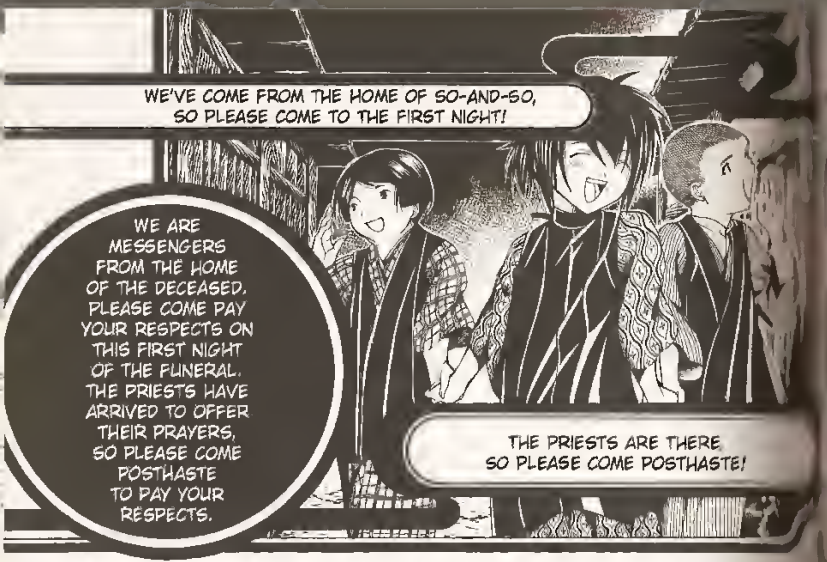
...WAS DIGESTED IN THE BATH.
SHE WAS DEVOURED BY THE INN.
WHILE SENSHI ADORED THIS OLD INN THE WAY IT WAS, HIS WIFE PROBABLY SUGGESTED THAT THEY RENOVATE IT.
IN ORDER TO PREVENT THAT, THE INN...
HA... HA HA HA! AS OWNER OF THE INN HE'S LIVED INSIDE THE BODY FOR SO LONG THAT HE'S NOW A PART OF THE INN
HE DOESN'T THINK IT ODD THAT HE LOVES THE INN MORE THAN PEOPLE HE EVEN TREATS HIS OWN DAUGHTER LIKE A STRANGER
NO, IF HE SHOULD EVER BETRAY THE INN, HE AND HIS DAUGHTER WILL MEET THEIR END LIKE HIS WIFE.. HE CAN NEVER GIVE UP THE INN, SO HE WILL SUFFER FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN THAT BODY...
HIRUKO ...
A NIGHTMARE HE'LL NEVER WAKE UP FROM.
THAT WAS ONE OF THE THINGS I LIKED ABOUT HIM.
HE WAS VERY CONSIDERATE AND WOULD ALWAYS LOOK AFTER ME AND EVERYONE ELSE.
IT'S TRUE HE ALWAYS TOOK GOOD CARE OF HIS THINGS.

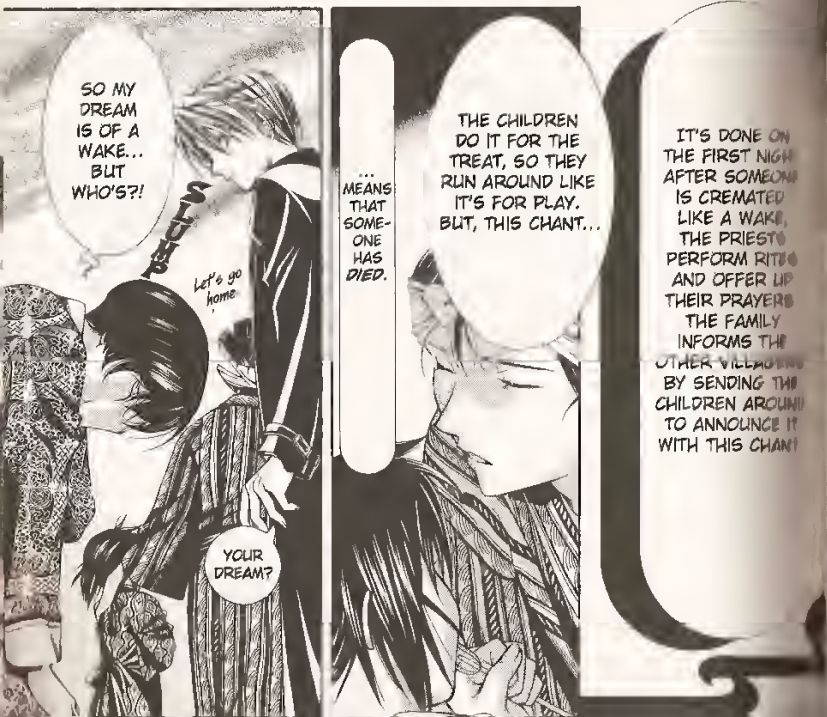
THE FIFTY-THIRD NIGHT: CHANT



WHAT? OH, NOT REALLY. I WAS JUST TRYING TO REMEMBER WHAT I HEARD THE KIDS SHOUTING OUT LAST NIGHT IN THE STREET. I WONDER WHAT IT WAS FOR..
CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT THEY MEAN?

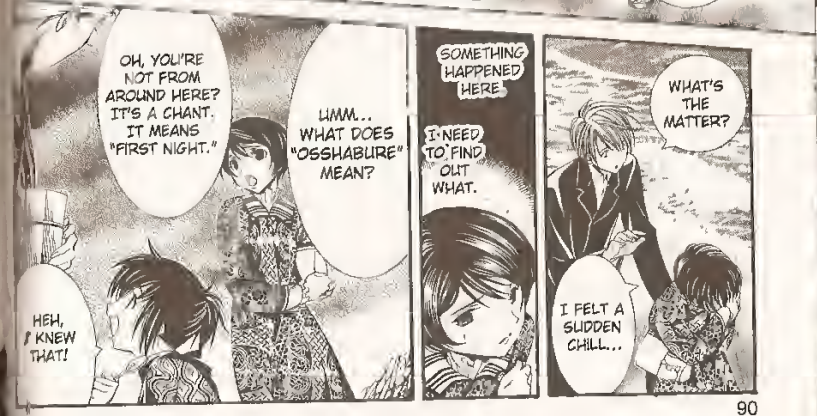
ONLY HE CAN ANSWER THAT. HOWEVER, FOR THE THREE YEARS HE'S BEEN LIVING THAT STRANGE LIFE, HE HAS CARED FOR HIS DAUGHTER IF HE HAD LOST ALL SENSE OF REASON...
THAT GIRL WOULD HAVE BEEN LONG DEAD.


WE'VE COME FROM THE HOME OF SO-AND-SO, SO PLEASE COME TO THE FIRST NIGHT!
WE ARE MESSENGERS FROM THE HOME OF THE DECEASED. PLEASE COME PAY YOUR RESPECTS ON THIS FIRST NIGHT OF THE FUNERAL. THE PRIESTS HAVE ARRIVED TO OFFER THEIR PRAYERS, SO PLEASE COME POSTHASTE TO PAY YOUR RESPECTS.
THE PRIESTS ARE THERE SO PLEASE COME POSTHASTE!


SO MY DREAM IS OF A WAKE... BUT WHO'S?!
Let's go home.
YOUR DREAM?
... MEANS THAT SOME-ONE HAS DIED.
THE CHILDREN DO IT FOR THE TREAT, SO THEY RUN AROUND LIKE IT'S FOR PLAY. BUT, THIS CHANT...
IT'S DONE ON THE FIRST NIGH AFTER SOMEON IS CREMATED LIKE A WAKE, THE PRIEST PERFORM RIT AND OFFER UP THEIR PRAYER THE FAMILY INFORMS TH OTHER VILLAG BY SENDING TH CHILDREN AROUN TO ANNOUNCE I WITH THIS CHAN

AT NIGHT, IF WE GO AROUND CHANTING WE CAN GET CANDY!
Umm WE'VE COME FROM... SO PLEASE COME...
THAT'S OSSHABURE!
THAT'S RIGHT! TEN YEARS AGO, WHEN I CAME HERE FROM TOKYO FOR A SHORT STAY I REMEMBER DOING THAT WITH MY FRIENDS. BUT NOW I CAN'T RECALL...

I TOLD YOU NOT TO GET SO CLOSE TO THE SEA— THE WAVES ARE ROUGH HERE!


OH, YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE? IT'S A CHANT. IT MEANS "FIRST NIGHT."
HEH, I KNEW THAT!
UMM... WHAT DOES "OSSHABURE" MEAN?
SOMETHING HAPPENED HERE.
I NEED TO FIND OUT WHAT.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I FELT A SUDDEN CHILL...

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

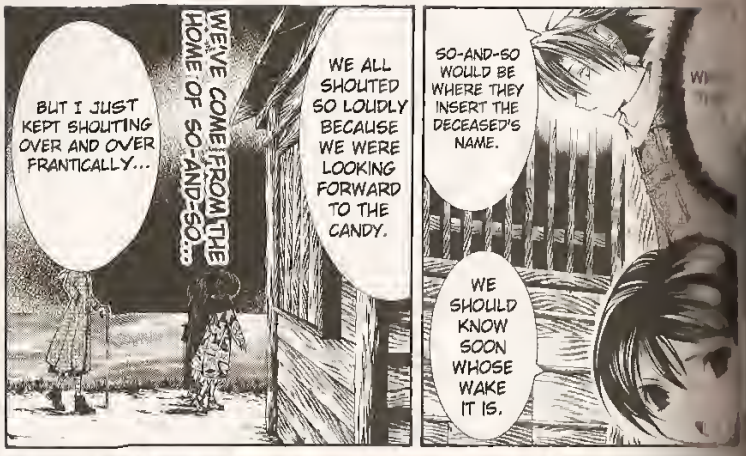
A FRAGMENTED MEMORY FROM TEN YEARS AGO... IS HER DREAM TRYING TO PIECE IT TOGETHER?

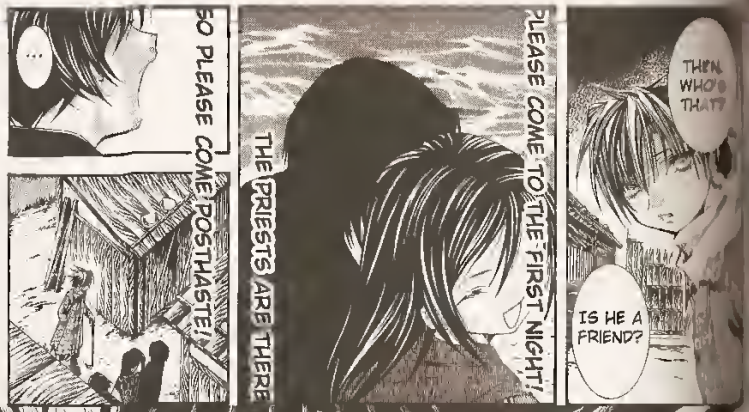
YOU'RE IN LUCK. ARE YOU HUNGRY, HIRUKO?
HUH? SURE.
WHAT? IS HE HIRUKO THE BAKU...?

IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR NIGHTMARE, I WILL INVESTIGATE YOUR DREAM.

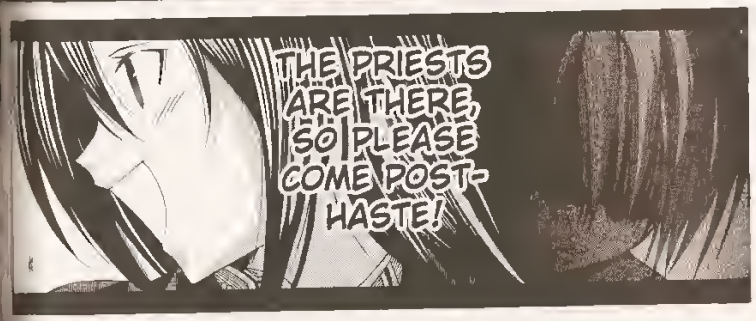
EVERY YEAR AROUND THIS TIME OF YEAR I HAVE THE SAME DREAM. IT'S ABOUT THE TIME I SPENT HERE.
YOU DID THE CHANT TEN YEARS AGO ARE YOU STILL DREAMING ABOUT THAT TIME?
SO THAT'S WHAT THOSE WORDS MEANT! I WISH I'D NEVER COME HERE TO FIND OUT!

I'M USUALLY JUST RUNNING AROUND IN THE DREAM, BUT NOW THAT I KNOW IT'S A WAKE... I'M SURE TO GO THERE!
I'M SCARED... WHY AM I SHAKING?!


WE'VE COME FROM THE HOME OF SO-AND-SO...
BUT I JUST KEPT SHOUTING OVER AND OVER FRANTICALLY...
WE ALL SHOUTED SO LOUDLY BECAUSE WE WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE CANDY.
SO-AND-SO WOULD BE WHERE THEY INSERT THE DECEASED'S NAME.
WE SHOULD KNOW SOON WHOSE WAKE IT IS.


...
SO PLEASE COME POSTHASTE!
PLEASE COME TO THE FIRST NIGHT!
THE PRIESTS ARE THERE
THEN, WHO'S THAT?
IS HE A FRIEND?

WE'VE COME FROM THE HOME OF SO-AND-SO, SO PLEASE COME TO THE FIRST NIGHT!


THE PRIESTS ARE THERE, SO PLEASE COME POST-HASTE!

ZZSHH~
IT'S REALLY ROUGH! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS, TSUYAKO. LET'S GO BACK OR HE'LL BE ANGRY AT US!
I WONDER WHAT MADE HER FORGET ...
AZZZZZZZZ
THIS IS THE PART OF HER MEMORY THAT WAS MISSING
NO, WE'RE GOING BACK! YOU CAN'T SEE IT THIS TIME OF YE— OH!
TODAY IS MY LAST CHANCE. STAY WITH ME, MITSUGI!
NO! I'M GOING BACK TO TOKYO TOMORROW!
PLOP
I WANT TO SEE THE MIRAGE!!
SHE'S WAKING AGAIN.
IT'S DANGEROUS, SO DON'T GET TOO CLOSE TO THE SEA!
FUNGI
TH-THIS HOUSE...
BUT DON'T GO BY THE BEACH!
DO A GOOD JOB. ONE MORE TIME AROUND AND YOU'LL GET YOUR TREAT.
IF SOMETHING HAPPENS... YOU MUST HELP ME, HIRUKO.
...
SHE WON'T STOP...
IT'S NOW...
A FRAGMENTED MEMORY IS SLEEPING!
THERE'S A CORPSE LYING BACK THERE.

AAAAH! MITSUGI!!!
COUGH
TSUYAKO... HELP!
H-HELP... THE WAVES...
MITSUGI WENT IN TO GET MY HAT... HELP HIM...
NO...
THUD
N-NO.
I DIDN'T DO IT...
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME...
My legs still hurt from the acid...

ZSSHH
I GO INTO THE SEA WHEN IT'S LIKE THIS, I'LL DROWN! THE ADULTS TOLD US TO NOT EVEN GO NEAR IT!
GO GET IT FOR ME. MY MOM WILL BE MAD IF I LOSE THAT.
DIDN'T YOU SAY THAT IF I WAS IN TROUBLE, YOU'D HELP ME?!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE MY BEST FRIEND, MITSUGI!
SPLASH
J-JUST A... LITTLE FURTHER.
ROOAR
VROOM
PLEASE! C'MON!
SPLASH
SPLASH

NO...
NO!
It only took a child to ride.
ZSSHA
MITSUGI DIED.
HE DROWNED BECAUSE OF ME!
THERE WAS NO ONE TO SAVE MITSUGI.
YOU WERE! HERE TEN YEARS AGO.
SO...
...ARE THERE...
...SO PLEASE COME POST-HASTE...
SLUMP
MITSUGI...
SHE'S REMEMBERED
AH.
AH...
UGH... DON'T STRUGGLE!
Help!
Help me!
PANT
PANT
I CAN'T BE...THE!
I CAN'T...!
THE WAVES HAVE DIED DOWN. NOW'S MY CHANCE.
!
THE CURRENT
I CAN'T GET BACK
GLUGGU
SPLASH
SPLASH
THE HAT. THAT TOO
GLUGGLUG
DASH
WASH

WE'VE COME FROM THE HOME OF YOHADO, SO PLEASE COME TO THE FIRST NIGHT.

THAT WAS MITSUGI'S LAST NAME.

I REMEMBER. THE CHANT THAT NIGHT WAS FOR HIS FAMILY.

SO WHY ...

BECAUSE HE DIED ...!!

I WAS SCARED.

THAT'S WHY...

I SUPPRESSED MY MEMORY OF THAT DAY, BUT I NEVER FORGOT IT.

YOU CONTINUED TO EXIST IN A FORM THAT ONLY I COULD SEE.

THE PRIESTS ARE THERE, SO PLEASE COME POSTHASTE!

WHY ARE YOU HERE?!

YOU DIED! I KILLED YOU!!

WE'VE COME FROM THE HOME OF YOHADO, SO PLEASE COME TO THE FIRST NIGHT.

LISTEN IT'S YOUR NAME

THAT MEANS THAT YOU'RE DEAD!!

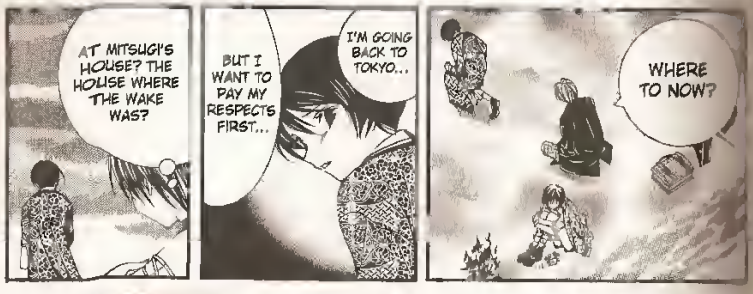
THE PRIESTS ARE THERE, SO PLEASE COME POSTHASTE!

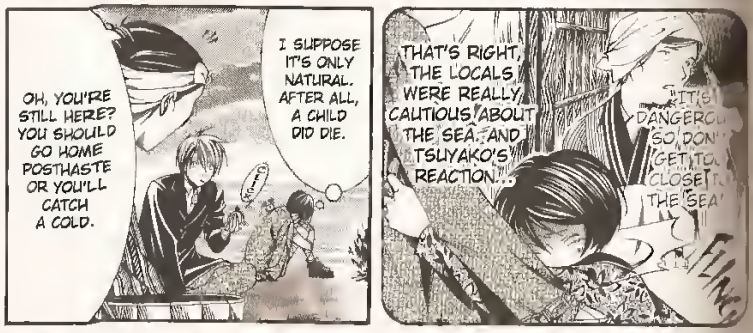
PLEASE GO AWAY AND STOP HAUNTING ME!

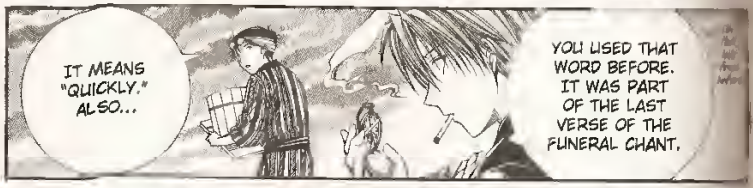
DON'T FOLLOW ME ANYMORE.. PLEASE, FORGIVE ME...

PLEASE ...

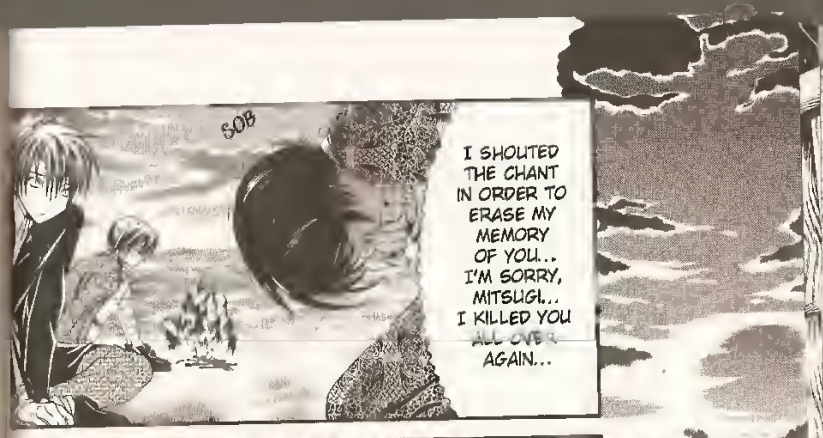
TIME TO WAKE UP


AT MITSUGI'S HOUSE? THE HOUSE WHERE THE WAKE WAS?
BUT I WANT TO PAY MY RESPECTS FIRST...
I'M GOING BACK TO TOKYO...
WHERE TO NOW?


OH, YOU'RE STILL HERE? YOU SHOULD GO HOME POSTHASTE OR YOU'LL CATCH A COLD.
I SUPPOSE IT'S ONLY NATURAL. AFTER ALL, A CHILD DID DIE.
THAT'S RIGHT, THE LOCALS WERE REALLY CAUTIOUS ABOUT THE SEA, AND TSUYAKO'S REACTION...
"IT'S DANGEROU SO, DON' GET TOO CLOSE TO THE SEA"
FLINCH


IT MEANS "QUICKLY." ALSO...
YOU USED THAT WORD BEFORE. IT WAS PART OF THE LAST VERSE OF THE FUNERAL CHANT.

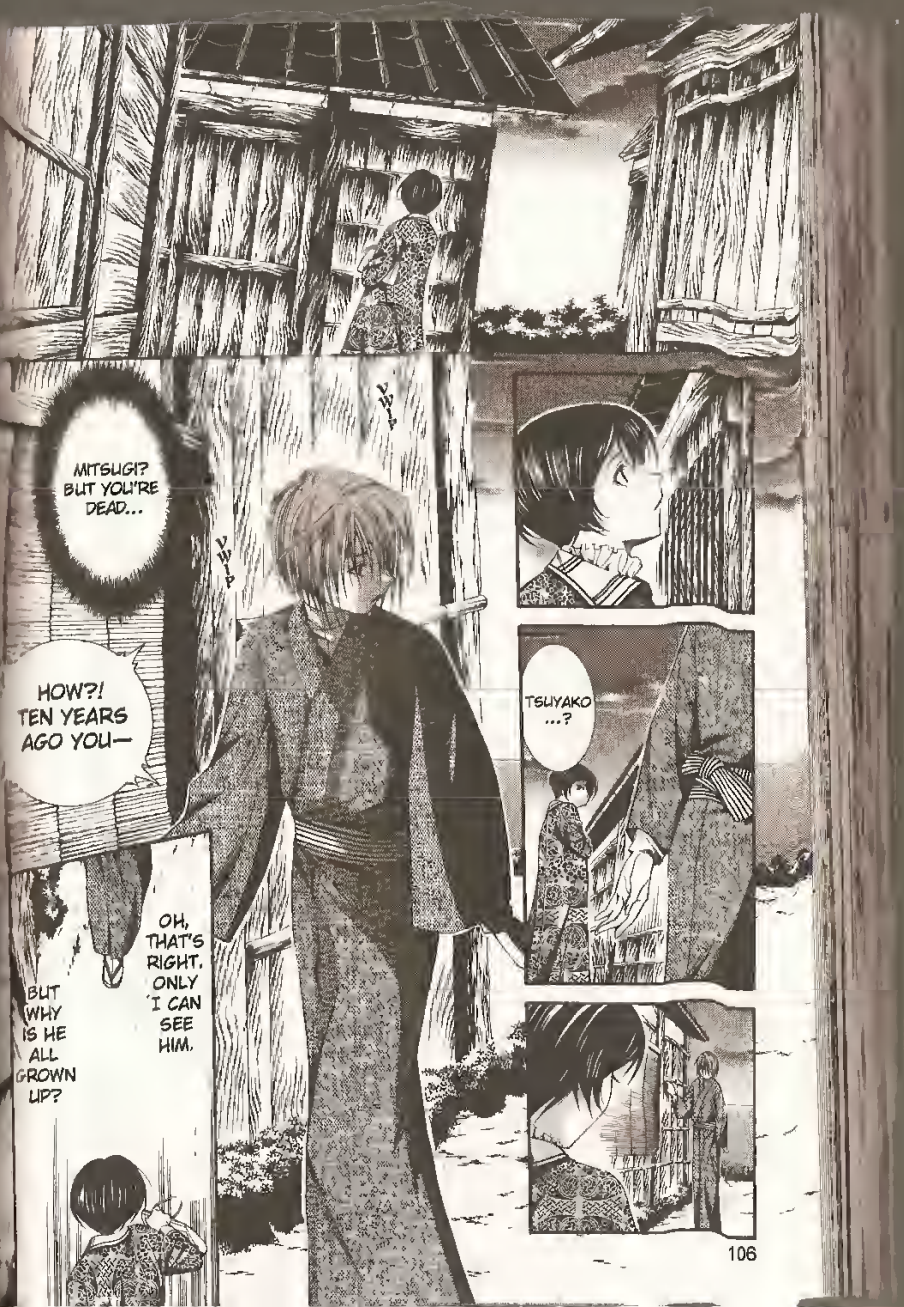
LET'S GO, HIRUKO. WE'LL BE LATE FOR THE TRAIN.
OKAY!
SO... GO HOME POST-HASTE!
Hmm...
...IT MEANS "OKAY," SO THAT'S HOW YOU HAVE TO RESPOND TO THE CHANT.
"SO PLEAS COME POST HASTE


SOB
I SHOUTED THE CHANT IN ORDER TO ERASE MY MEMORY OF YOU... I'M SORRY, MITSUGI... I KILLED YOU ALL OVER AGAIN...

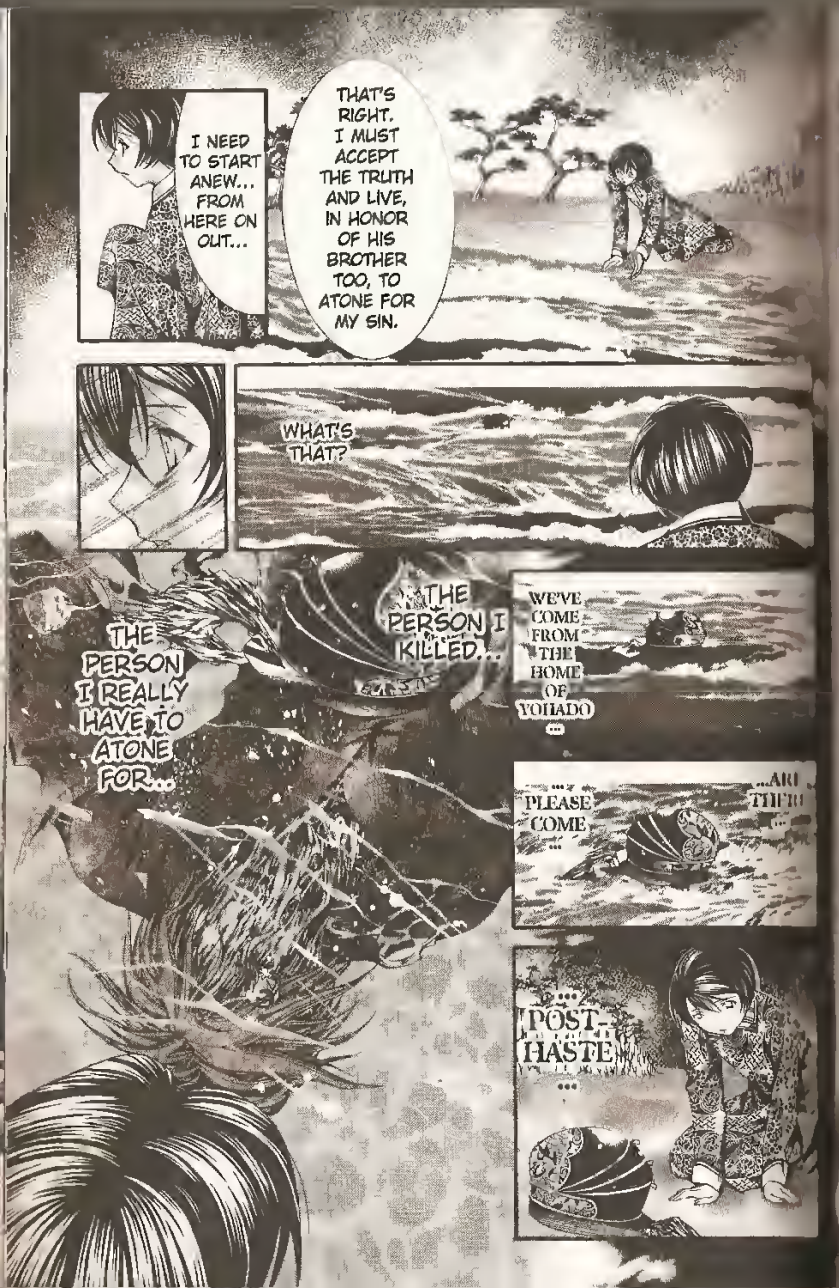
OR RATHER, THAT YOU HAVEN'T FORGIVEN YOURSELF YET...
BUT HE STILL DIDN'T DISAPPEAR. IT'S BECAUSE YOU STILL HAVE REGRETS AND WANT FORGIVENESS.
SOB
SOB

MITSUGI...
THAT'S ALL RIGHT. IF THAT IS MY ATONE-MENT...
THEN I'LL JUST HAVE TO CONTINUE SUFFERING IN MY DREAMS.

AH, HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU'VE BECOME TSUYAKO. I NEVER FORGOT ABOUT YOU.
I TRIED SO HARD TO FORGET ABOUT THAT DAY... BUT I COULDN'T.
BECAUSE IT WAS ALL YOUR FAULT.
TEN YEARS AGO I...!
YES, MY FAULT.
THAT DAY, YOU...
YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO SEE A MIRAGE. IF YOU HADN'T BEEN SO STUBBORN ABOUT IT, NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
EVEN THOUGH THE ADULTS ALWAYS TOLD US TO STAY AWAY FROM THE ROUGH SEA... AND I WARNED YOU THAT WE'D GET IN TROUBLE, ESPECIALLY WITH HIM...
COUGH
BUT THEN HE CAME.
THAT'S WHY YOU DROWNED WHILE I STOOD BY DOING NOTHING.
THAT'S WHY ALL THIS...


MITSUGI? BUT YOU'RE DEAD...
HOW?! TEN YEARS AGO YOU—
BUT WHY IS HE ALL GROWN UP?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. ONLY I CAN SEE HIM.
TSUYAKO ...?

I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO NEAR THE SEA!
MITSUGI WENT IN TO GET MY HAT... HELP HIM...
AFTER MY OLDER BROTHER SAVED ME, HE WENT BACK FOR YOUR HAT.
HE WAS SWALLOWED UP BY THE WAVES...
WE WERE CHILDREN, MORE SCARED ABOUT GETTING IN TROUBLE THAN SAD ABOUT MY BROTHER'S DEATH, SO...
WE'LL GET IN TROUBLE... WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
WHAT SHOULD WE DO? AFTER WE WERE TOLD TO STAY AWAY
WH... WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
FORGET IT.
WE NEVER SAW HIM!
WE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HIS DEATH.
SLUMP
FORGET IT!
GOT IT?! TSUYAKO?
FORGET IT...


I NEED TO START ANEW... FROM HERE ON OUT...
THAT'S RIGHT. I MUST ACCEPT THE TRUTH AND LIVE, IN HONOR OF HIS BROTHER TOO, TO ATONE FOR MY SIN.
WHAT'S THAT?
THE PERSON I KILLED...
THE PERSON I REALLY HAVE TO ATONE FOR...
WE'VE COME FROM THE HOME OF YOHADO
PLEASE COME
...ARI TSUYA
POST-HASTE

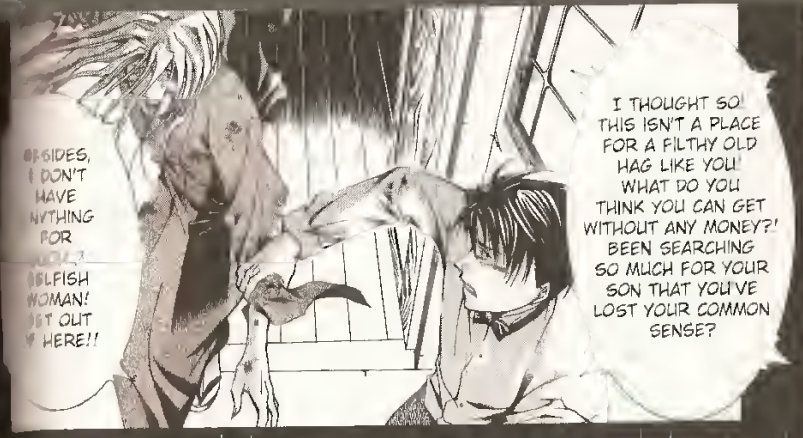
I WAS THERE WITH YOU.
OF COURSE. 'CAUSE HE WAS MY BROTHER.
BUT! THAT NIGHT WE WERE SHOUTING THE FUNERAL CHANT FOR YOUR FAMILY...
MY HEAD FEELS LIKE IT'S GOING TO BREAK.
S-SO THERE WAS SOMEONE IN HIRUKO'S PLACE THAT SAVED HIM?
BECAUSE OF THAT, YOU TRULY THOUGHT I WAS THE ONE WHO HAD DIED. BUT, TSUYAKO...
RIGHT... YOU HAD DONE AS I TOLD YOU— YOU ERASED ANY MEMORY OF MY BROTHER BEING THERE.
BUT YOU SHOUTED SO FRANTICALLY, LIKE YOU WERE SEEING A GHOST...
...THE PERSON YOU KILLED WAS MY BROTHER.
GOT IT, TSUYAKO?
...AND GO FORTH AND LIVE YOUR LIFE. THAT'D BE BEST.
YOU SHOULD KEEP THAT TO YOURSELF...

THE FIFTY-FOURTH NIGHT: SCISSORS

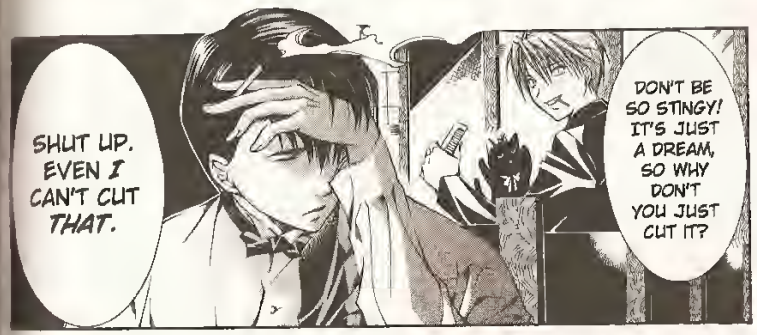
HA HA! IT'S A FAIR PRICE FOR WHAT I DO.
I LISTEN TO EACH CUSTOMER DESCRIBE THEIR LIFE, THEIR PERSONALITY AND THEIR THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE. AND BASED ON THAT, I CREATE A UNIQUE HAIRSTYLE SUITED JUST FOR THEM.
HAIR SALON
HE'S A CUSTOMER FOR HIRUKO. HE'S THE OWNER OF KAMIYA HAIR SALON. YOU KNOW, THAT POPULAR SALON...
WHAT?! THAT PLACE KNOWN FOR THEIR RIDICULOUSLY HIGH PRICES?!
WH- WHO ARE YOU?! GET AWAY FROM HER! I'LL SHRED YOU TO PIECES!!
SCISSORS

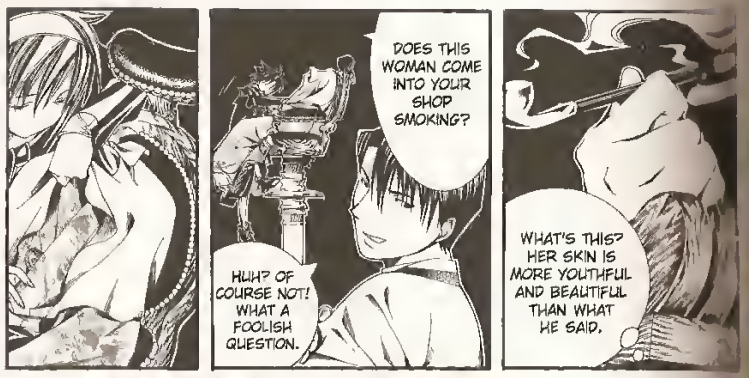
FOR A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, HER HAIR WAS COMPLETELY WHITE. SHE WAS STRANGE, WITH AN UNSTEADY LOOK IN HER EYES, BUT I LISTENED TO HER STORY.
LOOK, THIS IS MY SON! I FINALLY FOUND HIM PLEASE, I NEED YOU TO CUT MY HAIR...
THEN THE OTHER DAY WHEN I WAS AT MY DAUGHTER'S, I FOUND THIS PHOTO! I'M FINALLY GOING TO BE REUNITED WITH HIM.
WHEN MY SON WAS YOUNG, I WAS SO CAUGHT UP IN MYSELF THAT I NEGLECTED HIM, NEVER SHOWING HIM AFFECTION.
I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU TO CUT MY HAIR...
BUT WHEN I THINK OF ALL THE TERRIBLE THINGS I DID AND HOW LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE WE'VE SEEN EACH OTHER, I'M SCARED. I DON'T HAVE THE HEART TO FACE HIM...
IN THE END, HE RAN AWAY FROM HOME. THAT MADE ME REALIZE THE ERROR OF MY WAYS, AND I'VE BEEN FERVENTLY SEARCHING FOR HIM EVER SINCE.
OH. I, UM.
I DO CHARGE A FEE FOR MY SERVICES

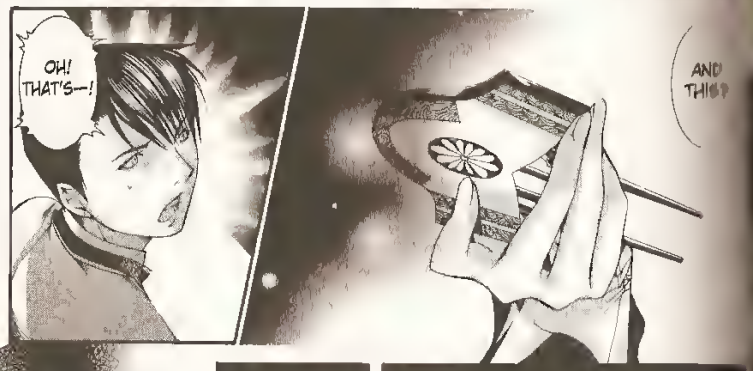
FOR THOSE CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE TOILED FOR YEARS AND HAVE GIVEN UP ON THE FUTURE, I CREATE A HAIRSTYLE THAT REFLECTS ALL THEIR HARD WORK, BOOSTING THEIR CONFIDENCE.
ANY ACTORS AND OTHER FESSIONALS VE GONE ON O SUCCESS WITH MY HAIRCUTS.
TO REPRESENT HIS NIHILISTIC LIFESTYLE, IT WOULD BE WHITE, AND I'D LET IT GROW REALLY LONG TO REPRESENT HAVING NO END IN SIGHT.
AND I'D TIE IT WITH A DARK-COLORED BAND, REPRESENTING NIGHTMARES. HEH! YOU WOULDN'T EVEN NEED SCISSORS.
What a strange hairstyle...
OH REALLY? SO WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO HIRUKO'S HAIR? HE'S FORSAKEN LIFE AND IS GOING TO SPEND ETERNITY CHASING NIGHTMARES.
I'VE NEVER DONE A BAKU.
ANYWAY, ABOUT MY NIGHTMARE. THE OTHER DAY, A FILTHY WOMAN BARGED INTO MY SHOP.
He's the ideal Baku?!
Amazing!
I SEE... OH! THAT'S EXACTLY LIKE TSUKISHIRO!

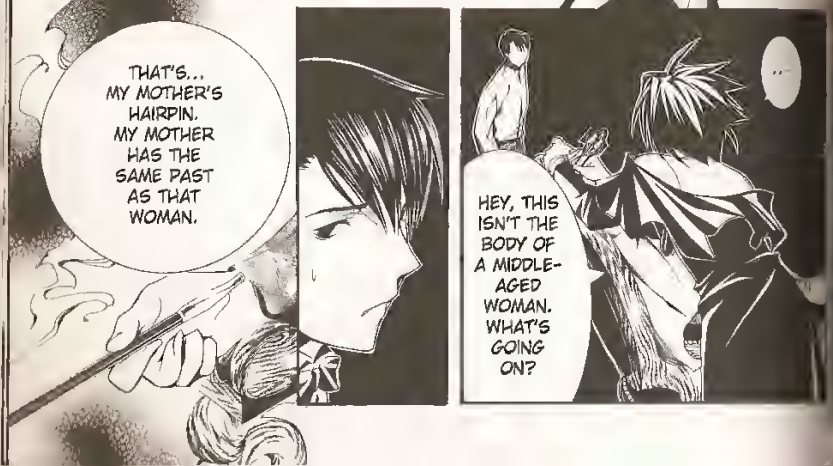

I THOUGHT SO! THIS ISN'T A PLACE FOR A FILTHY OLD HAG LIKE YOU! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU CAN GET WITHOUT ANY MONEY?! BEEN SEARCHING SO MUCH FOR YOUR SON THAT YOU'VE LOST YOUR COMMON SENSE?

BUT EVER SINCE, SHE KEEPS COMING ROUND TO THE SALON SO MUCH THAT I'M SEEING HER IN MY DREAMS. SHE BEGS ME, "CUT IT... CUT IT..." I CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE

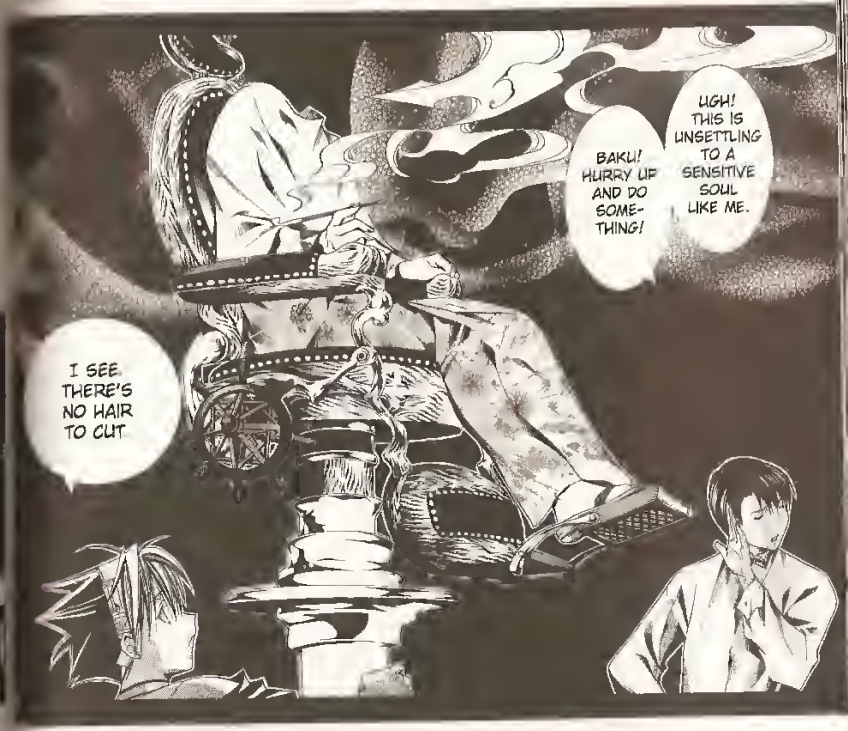



DOES THIS WOMAN COME INTO YOUR SHOP SMOKING?
HUH? OF COURSE NOT! WHAT A FOOLISH QUESTION.
WHAT'S THIS? HER SKIN IS MORE YOUTHFUL AND BEAUTIFUL THAN WHAT HE SAID.


OH! THAT'S—!
AND THIS?


THAT'S... MY MOTHER'S HAIRPIN. MY MOTHER HAS THE SAME PAST AS THAT WOMAN.
HEY, THIS ISN'T THE BODY OF A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN. WHAT'S GOING ON?
...

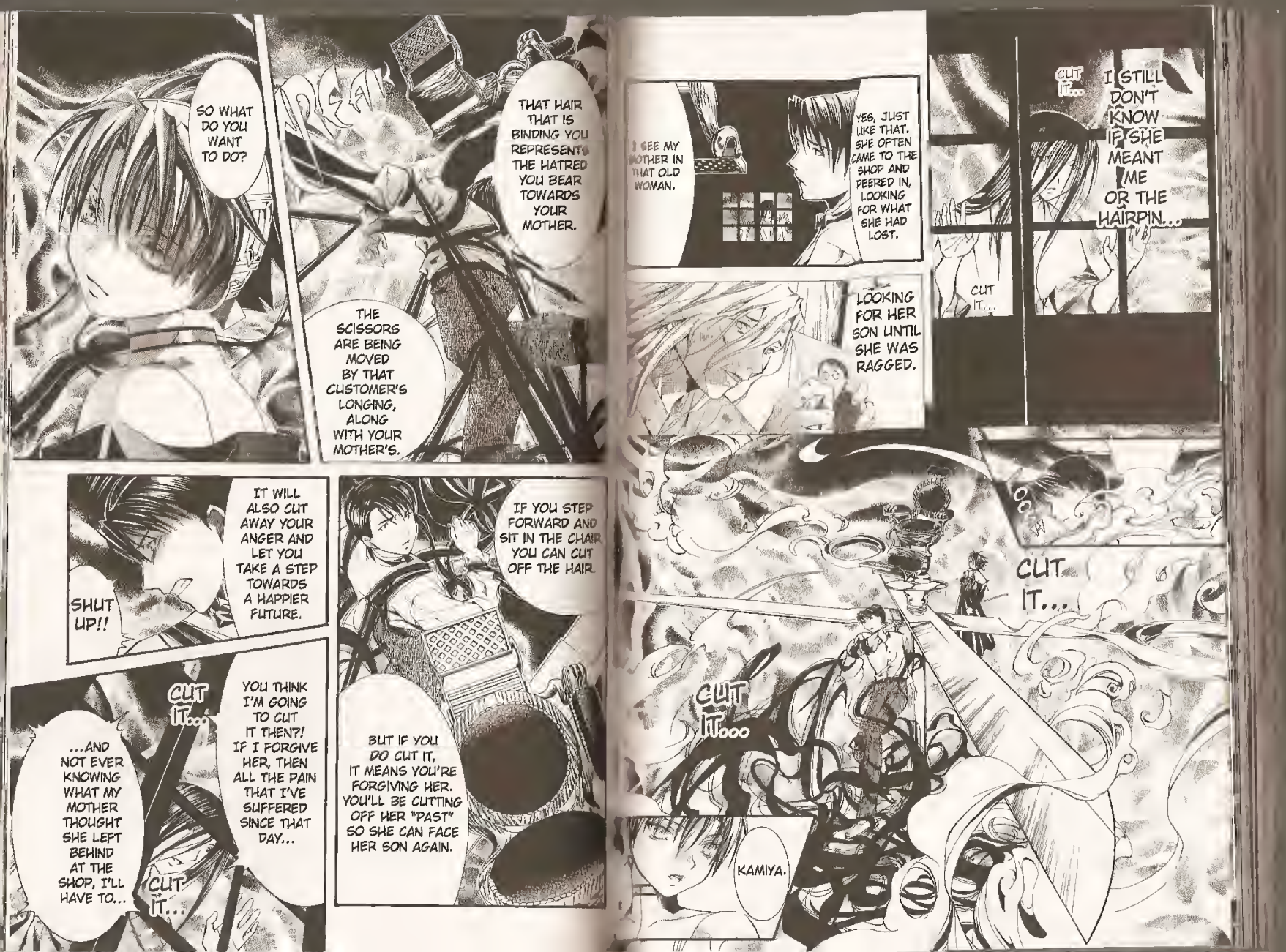
CUT IT...
CUT IT...


UGH! THIS IS UNSETTLING TO A SENSITIVE SOUL LIKE ME.
BAKU! HURRY UP AND DO SOME-THING!
I SEE. THERE'S NO HAIR TO CUT.

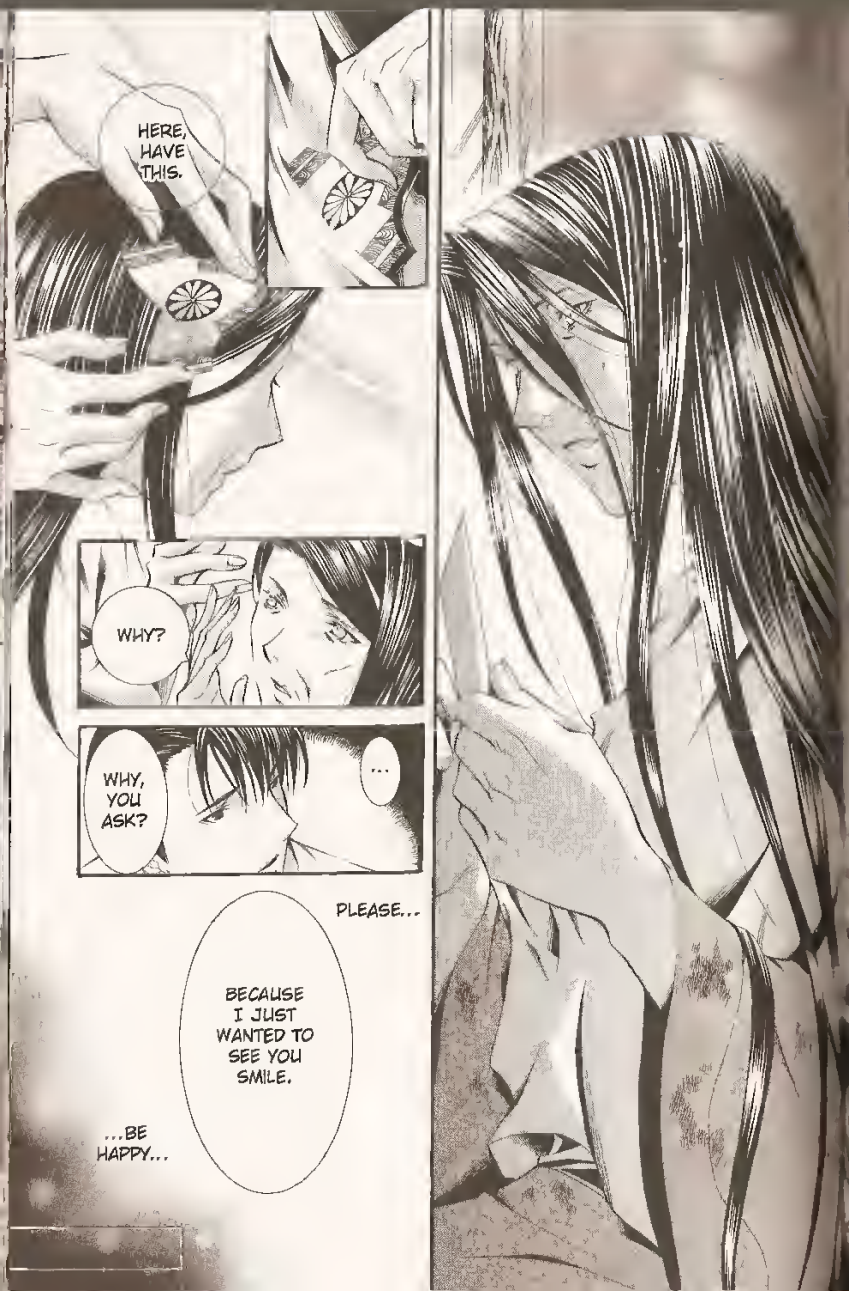
THIS IS...
HEY! WHAT'S HAPPENING?! DO SOMETHING!
I WAS SO HAPPY. I WANTED HER TO BE LIKE THAT MORE SO I GOT A JOB AT A BARBERSHOP I KNEW IN EXCHANGE FOR HER HAIR APPOINTMENT.
BUT...
JUST CONTINUE!
WHAT--?!
KAMIYA, CONTINUE YOUR STORY.
...
I WAS LONELY... IN MY DESPERATION...
MOTHER... NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TRIED TO MAKE HER HAPPY, LIFE WITHOUT MY FATHER GAVE HER NO PURPOSE IN LIFE.
?!
AGH!
WHAT IS THIS?!
SHE SENT MY SISTER TO LIVE WITH RELATIVES AND NEGLECTED ME.
AFTER MY FATHER DIED, MY MOTHER WAS A SHELL OF HER FORMER SELF. SHE SOLD OFF OUR HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS AND SQUANDERED THE MONEY. SHE WENT TO WASTE.
OH, HOW LOVELY!
IT WAS ONLY A MOMENT...
I BOUGHT A HAIRPIN WITH MONEY I HAD SAVED UP AND PUT IT IN HER HAIR.
SHE SMOKED ALL DAY LONG AND COULDN'T CARELESS ABOUT HER APPEARANCE, ALLOWING HER HAIR TO GROW.
BUT THE BEAUTY SHE POSSESSED WHEN MY FATHER WAS ALIVE HAD NOT RETURNED. BACK WHEN ALL SHE LIVED FOR WAS TO SUPPORT MY FATHER.

...I STILL BELIEVED IN HER.
YANK
ACK! HA HA!
DESPITE THAT...
UNTIL THAT DAY ...
I'M OF SOME USE TO YOU, RIGHT, MOM? YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I CARE, RIGHT?
SIGN. KAMIYA BARBER SHOP
HM, WHAT SHALL I DO TODAY?
THAT'S NOT REALLY HER IF SHE GETS HER HAIR DONE SHE'LL SMILE
I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER! LIKE A WEIGHT HAS BEEN LIFTED OFF MY SHOULDERS!
!
I'LL DO ANYTHING FOR YOU.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, MY LIFE WOULD BE SO MUCH BETTER!
THEN, SHE SAID...
SHUT UP! I NEED THE MONEY TO BUY TOBACCO!!
YOU DON'T NEED THIS ANYMORE, RIGHT?! GIVE IT BACK!
I DON'T NEED YOU.
YOU'RE SUCH A NUISANCE ...

NO, NOTHING WAS LEFT BEHIND.
I GIVE UP...
!
I LEFT SOMETHING HERE,..
CLATTER
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT PLEASE LEAVE NOW.
BUT I'M SURE I LEFT IT HERE...
SHE FORG SOME THING IS IT TO PIN..
...OR ME?
SHE TOOK ME IN AND MADE ME HER HEIR.
THE WOMAN KNEW MY SITUATION AT HOME AND TOOK PITY ON ME.
IT'D BE LOVELY IF A GENTLEMAN ASKED ME OUT.
I NEED THE MONEY TO BUY TOBACCO!!
UM, I LEFT SOME-THING.
AFTER THAT, MOTHER WOULD COME LOOK INTO THE SHOP EVERY NOW AND THEN.
TO PROTECT MY FEELINGS, MY EMPLOYER NEVER LET HER IN.
...SHE'LL FORGET IT AGAIN.
WHICH-EVER IT IS...
SLAM
MOM?
HUH?! BUT WE ALWAYS GO HOME TOGETHER!
HEE HEE! PERHAPS I SHOULD GO OUT AND SHOW IT OFF. IT'D BE LOVELY IF A GENTLEMAN ASKED ME OUT.
WELL, I HAVE TO GO. I'LL COME AGAIN.
KLUNK
SHE FORGOT ME?!
SHE DOESN'T NEED ME. OR EVEN THIS HAIRPIN...
I... I REALLY AM JUST A NUISANCE.
CLACK


SO WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?
THAT HAIR THAT IS BINDING YOU REPRESENTS THE HATRED YOU BEAR TOWARDS YOUR MOTHER.
THE SCISSORS ARE BEING MOVED BY THAT CUSTOMER'S LONGING, ALONG WITH YOUR MOTHER'S.
SHUT UP!!
IT WILL ALSO CUT AWAY YOUR ANGER AND LET YOU TAKE A STEP TOWARDS A HAPPIER FUTURE.
IF YOU STEP FORWARD AND SIT IN THE CHAIR YOU CAN CUT OFF THE HAIR.
BUT IF YOU DO CUT IT, IT MEANS YOU'RE FORGIVING HER. YOU'LL BE CUTTING OFF HER "PAST" SO SHE CAN FACE HER SON AGAIN.
CUT IT...
YOU THINK I'M GOING TO CUT IT THEN?! IF I FORGIVE HER, THEN ALL THE PAIN THAT I'VE SUFFERED SINCE THAT DAY...
CUT IT...
...AND NOT EVER KNOWING WHAT MY MOTHER THOUGHT SHE LEFT BEHIND AT THE SHOP, I'LL HAVE TO...
I SEE MY MOTHER IN THAT OLD WOMAN.
YES, JUST LIKE THAT. SHE OFTEN CAME TO THE SHOP AND PEERED IN, LOOKING FOR WHAT SHE HAD LOST.
LOOKING FOR HER SON UNTIL SHE WAS RAGGED.
CUT IT...
I STILL DON'T KNOW IF SHE MEANT ME OR THE HAIRPIN...
CUT IT...
CUT IT...
CUT IT...
KAMIYA.

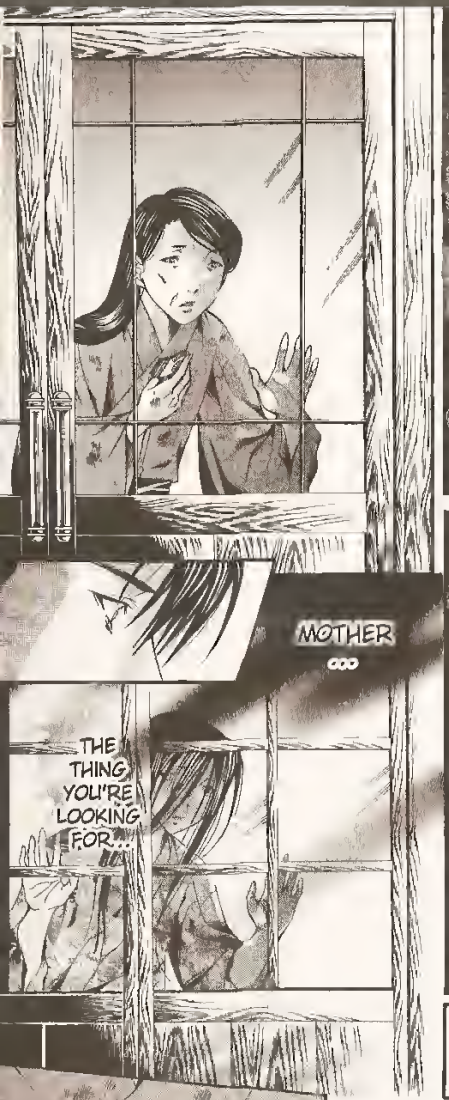
SNAP
I WON'T!
I'LL NEVER CUT IT!
BUT IF YOU DON'T...
SO YOU'D RATHER NOT MOVE AND HAVE IT CUT OFF YOUR HEAD?
DO YOU WANT TO LIVE YOUR LIFE FULL OF ANIMOSITY?
CUT IT...
CUT IT...
SHUT UP! WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE HER?! YOU MUST BE JOKING!
I WON'T MOVE EVEN IF MY BODY IS CUT TO BITS!!

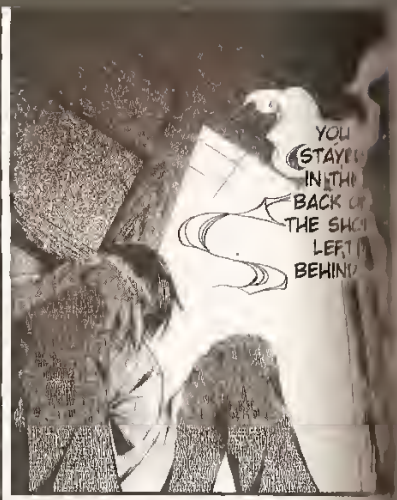

HERE, HAVE THIS.
WHY?
WHY, YOU ASK?
...
PLEASE...
BECAUSE I JUST WANTED TO SEE YOU SMILE.
...BE HAPPY...

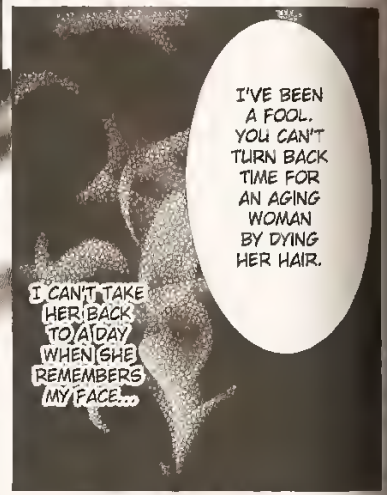
PLEASE, MAKE ME PRETTY. GIVE ME THE CONFIDENCE TO SEE MY SON AGAIN.
I WON'T CUT IT.
THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO CUT IT.
HAIR SALON
THAT'S WHY I WON'T CUT IT.
I'M GOING TO CREATE A HAIRSTYLE BASED ON YOUR LIFE, PERSONALITY AND THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE.
TICK TICK
YOUR LONG AND RAGGED HAIR REPRESENTS YOUR PAST LAZINESS AND ALL THE YEARS YOU WERE SEARCHING TIRELESSLY.
BUT YOUR WHITE HAIR, WHICH REPRESENTS YOUR TIME WITHOUT YOUR SON, I'LL DYE BLACK, TAKING YOU BACK TO A TIME WHEN HE WAS STILL IN YOUR LIFE.
TICK TICK

MOTHER-IN-LAW?!
I'VE MISSED YOU! DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU?
YES, I'M YOUR MOTHER! YOU REMEMBER ME!
MOTHER, I'M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT. THAT HAIRPIN REALLY SUITS YOU.
WELL, NOW THAT I LOOK AT IT, IT IS CUTE. A HAIRDRESSER GAVE IT TO ME...
THINGS HAVE GOTTEN REALLY BAD... PLAY ALONG. IT MAY ONLY BE A TEMPORARY LAPSE...
THE ONE WHO DOESN'T REMEMBER IS *HER*. SHE THINKS THAT YOU'RE HER SON, NOT HER SON-IN-LAW. THIS DELUSION MUST BE HER ONLY WAY TO COPE WITH IT.
...
THAT HAIRDRESSER...
I... FORGOT...
THIS...

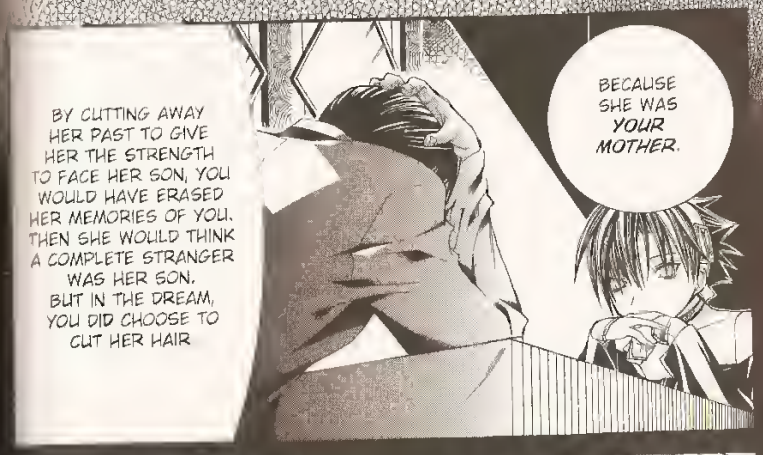
OH MY, IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
YOU'VE DYED YOUR HAIR BLACK. YOU LOOK LIKE YOU USED TO, MOTHER. WHAT HAPPENED?
HE'S NOT HERE!
REALLY, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?! YOU'VE BEEN ACTING STRANGE LATELY. ALL THIS TIME SEARCHING FOR MY BROTHER HAS TAKEN A TOLL ON YOUR MIND...
YOU POOR THING. WHY DON'T YOU LIVE WITH US?
HIM? DO YOU MEAN MY BROTHER?
WHAT HAPPENED? WELL, I HEARD I COULD FIND HIM HERE SO I CAME TO MEET HIM... MY HEART FEELS LIKE IT'S GOING TO BURST.
!
AH...
AH...
WOBBLE
THAT'S A GOOD IDEA. SHE CAN HELP OUT NOW THAT YOU'RE PREGNANT.

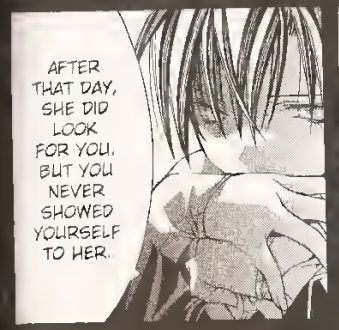


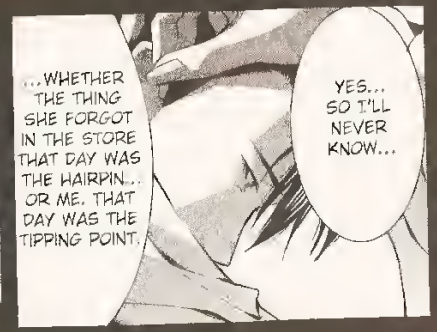



I'VE BEEN A FOOL. YOU CAN'T TURN BACK TIME FOR AN AGING WOMAN BY DYING HER HAIR.
I CAN'T TAKE HER BACK TO A DAY WHEN SHE REMEMBERS MY FACE...

OF COURSE YOU COULDN'T.


BY CUTTING AWAY HER PAST TO GIVE HER THE STRENGTH TO FACE HER SON, YOU WOULD HAVE ERASED HER MEMORIES OF YOU. THEN SHE WOULD THINK A COMPLETE STRANGER WAS HER SON. BUT IN THE DREAM, YOU DID CHOOSE TO CUT HER HAIR
BECAUSE SHE WAS *YOUR MOTHER.*



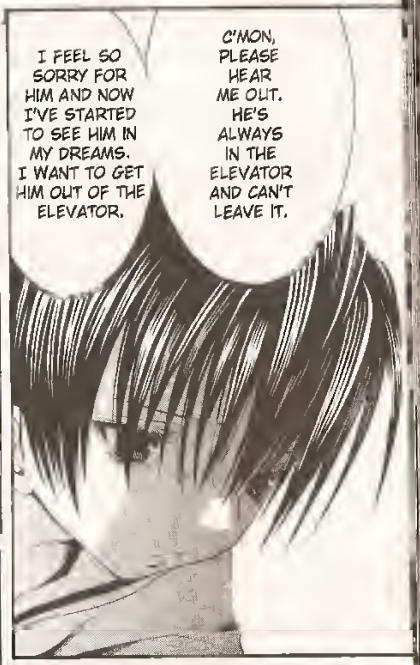

...WHETHER THE THING SHE FORGOT IN THE STORE THAT DAY WAS THE HAIRPIN... OR ME. THAT DAY WAS THE TIPPING POINT.
YES... SO I'LL NEVER KNOW...

The Fifty-Fifth Night: The Elevator

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
...Really

I'VE BEEN HAVING DREAMS ABOUT THE ELEVATOR BOY, TODOROKI.
MY PARENTS OWN A DEPARTMENT STORE. ON HOLIDAYS THEY TAKE ME THERE WITH THEM.
BE QUIET...

THE STORE IS FIVE STORIES HIGH. MY DREAM ALWAYS STARTS ON THE FIRST FLOOR.
YES, SO PLEASE HELP ME.


I FEEL SO SORRY FOR HIM AND NOW I'VE STARTED TO SEE HIM IN MY DREAMS. I WANT TO GET HIM OUT OF THE ELEVATOR.
C'MON, PLEASE HEAR ME OUT. HE'S ALWAYS IN THE ELEVATOR AND CAN'T LEAVE IT.

I-I'M NOT DOING IT BECAUSE I WANT TO RIDE IN THE ELEVATOR!
UH-HUH. SURE...
SWIP
OH! YOU'RE GOING TO HELP HER?

CAN'T LEAVE THE ELEVATOR?

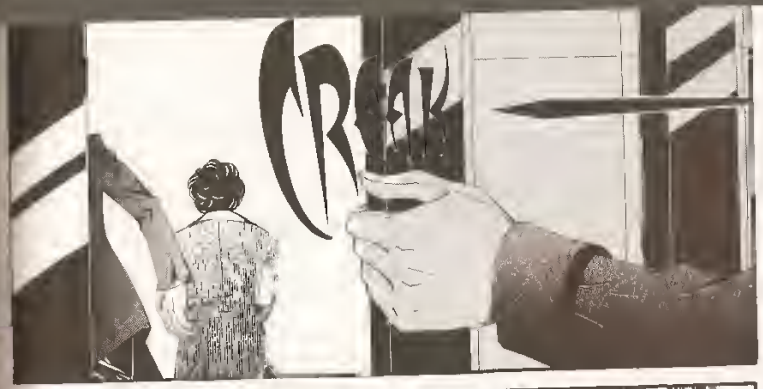
HA HA HA! YOU LIKE THAT A LOT THESE DAYS. IS THE NOVELTY STILL EXCITING FOR YOU?
NO, IT'S OKAY. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I'LL BE IN THE ELEVATOR IT'S SO FUN RIDING IT UP AND DOWN!
T I N G
CREAK
SORRY TO ALWAYS BOTHER YOU, TODOROKI. PLEASE KEEP AN EYE ON URA.
MY MY! SEEMS URA'S TAKEN A LIKING TO YOU.
1F
YES, I'LL TAKE A LOOK AROUND TOO. IT MAY NOT BE EXCITING ACCOMPANYING US WHILE WE WORK SINCE IT'S YOUR HOLIDAY, BUT YOU LIKE COMING HERE, RIGHT, URA?
I'M GOING TO HAVE A LOOK AROUND THE STORE.
SINCE YOU ASK TO COME, HOW CAN I SAY NO? WHY DON'T YOU GO WITH YOUR MOTHER AND SHOP?

THANK YOU...
I'M AFRAID THAT CAN NEVER HAPPEN, BUT...

I WANT HIM TO GET OUT OF THE ELEVATOR WITH ME. I WANT TO GO SEE THE SEA...

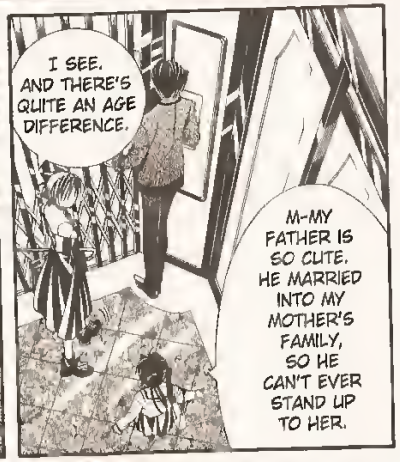
YOU LIKE HIM, DON'T YOU?
SEEMS LIKE HE'S BEEN SWEET ON YOU.

CLICK
GOING UP.


CREAK

WHICH FLOOR SHALL I TAKE YOU TO?

WHERE CAN I GO SO THAT YOU'LL GET OUT WITH ME?
...


I SEE. AND THERE'S QUITE AN AGE DIFFERENCE.
M-MY FATHER IS SO CUTE. HE MARRIED INTO MY MOTHER'S FAMILY, SO HE CAN'T EVER STAND UP TO HER.

IF YOU HAD MONEY, THEN YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORK!
THEN YOU'D BE FREE TO—
PLOP

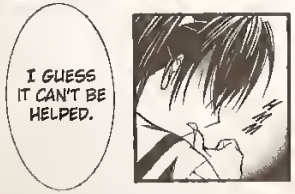
I HAVE NO FREEDOM.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. THIS IS MY JOB.
BUT YOU CAN LEAVE WHEN YOUR JOB IS OVER, RIGHT?

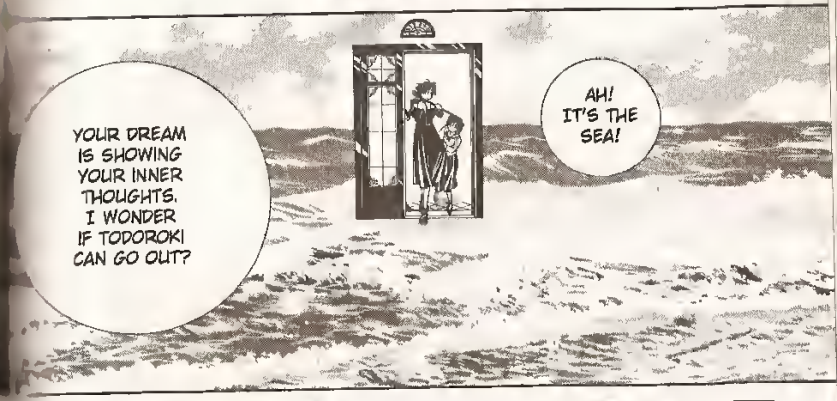
YOU SAY THAT, BUT...

YOU'RE STILL YOUNG SO YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH EXPERIENCE YET. JUST LEAVE THE BUSINESS SIDE OF IT TO ME.

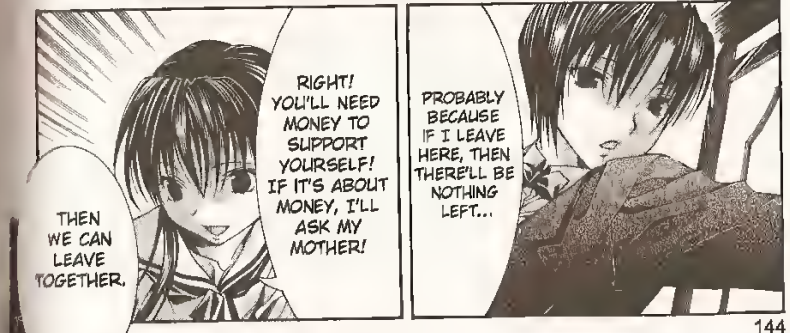
IT'S ALL RIGHT. WE SHOULD TAKE OUR LEAVE.
BUT!
CREAK

THEY SEEM TO BE IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING. PLEASE, DON'T WORRY ON MY BEHALF...
TOO BAD. SOMETIMES THERE ARE TIMES LIKE THIS WHEN WE SHOULDN'T BOTHER THEM.


I GUESS IT CAN'T BE HELPED.

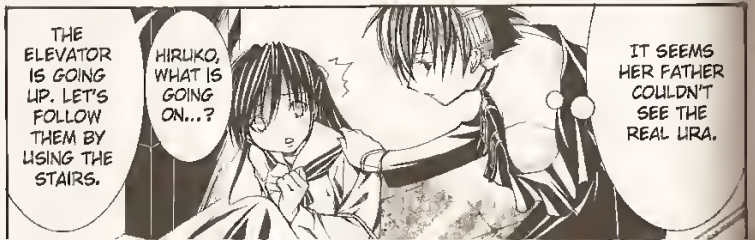

YOUR DREAM IS SHOWING YOUR INNER THOUGHTS. I WONDER IF TODOROKI CAN GO OUT?
AH! IT'S THE SEA!

HMM, IT DOESN'T SEEM TO WORK. TODOROKI, WHAT DO YOU THINK? WHY DO YOU THINK YOU CAN'T LEAVE?
LET'S GO TO THE SEA TOGETHER!
...
VANK
COME ON! LET'S GO!
I ALWAYS TRY, BUT...
VANK


THEN WE CAN LEAVE TOGETHER.
RIGHT! YOU'LL NEED MONEY TO SUPPORT YOURSELF! IF IT'S ABOUT MONEY, I'LL ASK MY MOTHER!
PROBABLY BECAUSE IF I LEAVE HERE, THEN THERE'LL BE NOTHING LEFT...

HEY! I TOLD YOU TO LOOK AFTER URA, DIDN'T I?!
FATHER?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
OH!
IT'S ME... THERE'S ANOTHER ME!

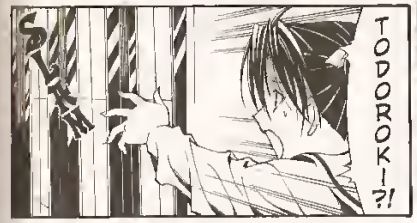
Y-YES, SIR.
TH-THIS IS...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I'M RIGHT HERE!! FATHER?!
DON'T SLACK OFF! THIS IS MY TREASURE!

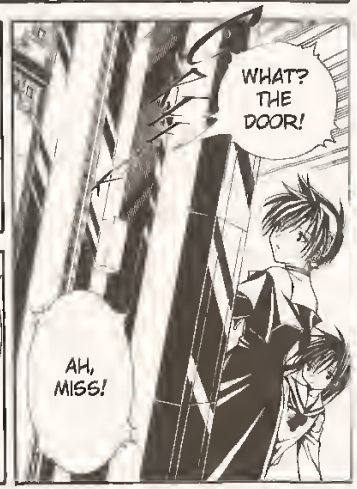

THE ELEVATOR IS GOING UP. LET'S FOLLOW THEM BY USING THE STAIRS.
HIRUKO, WHAT IS GOING ON...?
IT SEEMS HER FATHER COULDN'T SEE THE REAL URA.

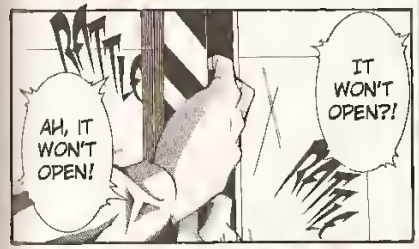
TIMING

HUH? FOOT-STEPS?
TOK TOK TOK

OH, THIS IS THE STORE. IT LOOKS JUST LIKE IT DOES IN REALITY.

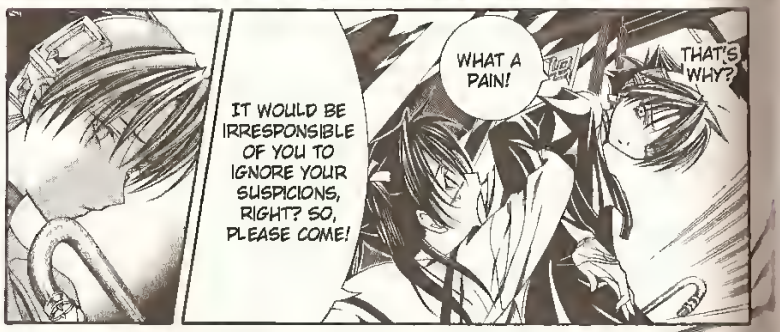

TODOROK!?


WHAT? THE DOOR!
AH, MISS!


RATTLE
AH, IT WON'T OPEN!
IT WON'T OPEN?!
RATTLE

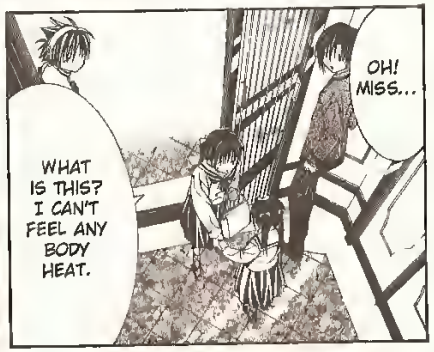
CLACK
CLACK

THAT'S WHY YOU SHOULD COME TOMORROW! IF YOU THINK SOMETHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME, PROTECT ME.
DON'T YOU WONDER ABOUT THIS OTHER URA?
EVERYTHING WAS NORMAL UP THROUGH THE THIRD FLOOR. BUT AT THE FOURTH, THINGS STARTED TO GET STRANGE. DON'T YOU WONDER WHAT THAT INCIDENT WAS ABOUT?

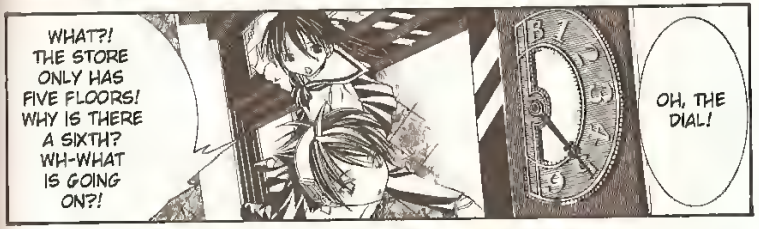

IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE OF YOU TO IGNORE YOUR SUSPICIONS, RIGHT? SO, PLEASE COME!
WHAT A PAIN!
TSK!
THAT'S WHY?

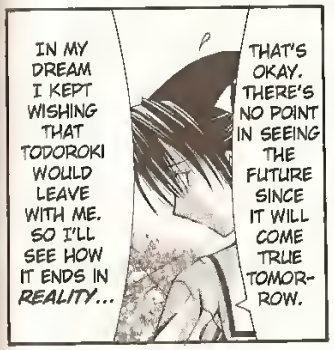
TIME TO WAKE UP.

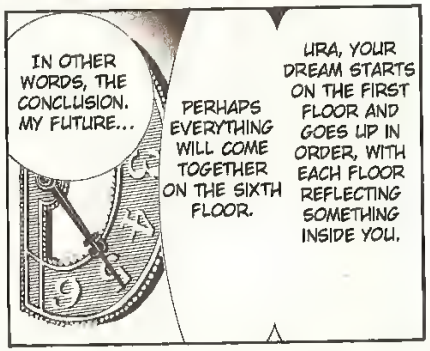
IF ONLY SHE COULD STAY WITH TODOROKI FOREVER, I'D BE SO HAPPY.


OH! MISS...
WHAT IS THIS? I CAN'T FEEL ANY BODY HEAT.

BUT IT'S ACTUALLY ME.

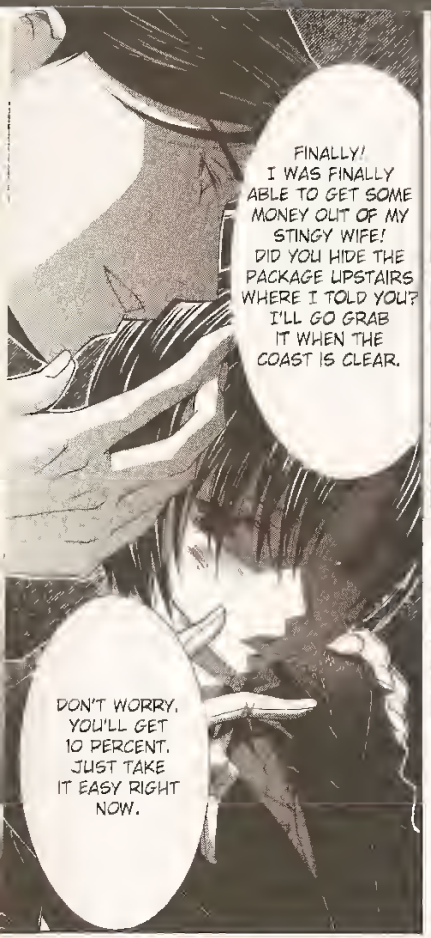

WHAT?! THE STORE ONLY HAS FIVE FLOORS! WHY IS THERE A SIXTH? WH-WHAT IS GOING ON?!
OH, THE DIAL!


IN MY DREAM I KEPT WISHING THAT TODOROKI WOULD LEAVE WITH ME. SO I'LL SEE HOW IT ENDS IN *REALITY*...
THAT'S OKAY. THERE'S NO POINT IN SEEING THE FUTURE SINCE IT WILL COME TRUE TOMORROW.


IN OTHER WORDS, THE CONCLUSION. MY FUTURE...
PERHAPS EVERYTHING WILL COME TOGETHER ON THE SIXTH FLOOR.
URA, YOUR DREAM STARTS ON THE FIRST FLOOR AND GOES UP IN ORDER, WITH EACH FLOOR REFLECTING SOMETHING INSIDE YOU.

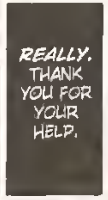
T I N G
HUH? FOOT-STEPS?
TAK TOK
THIS IS THE FOURTH FLOOR.
PLEASE WATCH YOUR STEP...
SMILE
NEXT IS THE FOURTH FLOOR, WHERE...
M-Miss...! I have to alert them...
NOOO! LET GO OF ME!
GEEZ...
TODOROKI!!
WOOSH

SORRY TO ALWAYS BOTHER YOU, TODOROKI. PLEASE KEEP AN EYE ON URA.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I'LL BE IN THE ELEVATOR.
GOING UP.
THE NEXT DAY...
MY MY! SEEMS URA'S TAKEN A LIKING TO YOU, TODOROKI.
YOU SHOULD TRY TO STAY FIT LIKE HER FATHER!
SHAME ON YOU! IF SOMETHING BAD SHOULD HAPPEN TO HER LIKE YOU SAID, THAT WOULD BE TERRIBLE. DON'T BE SO LAZY.
CREAK
AH... IT'S JUST LIKE HER DREAM.
WHAT A PAIN. I'M TIRED...
MIZUKI... URA DIDN'T TAKE A LOOK AT THE SIXTH FLOOR. SO THAT MUST MEAN...
YANK
DON'T BE SO RELUCTANT. COME ON. LET'S GET IN.


FINALLY! I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO GET SOME MONEY OUT OF MY STINGY WIFE! DID YOU HIDE THE PACKAGE UPSTAIRS WHERE I TOLD YOU? I'LL GO GRAB IT WHEN THE COAST IS CLEAR.
DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL GET 10 PERCENT. JUST TAKE IT EASY RIGHT NOW.

CREAK
MOTHER!
URA!
TING

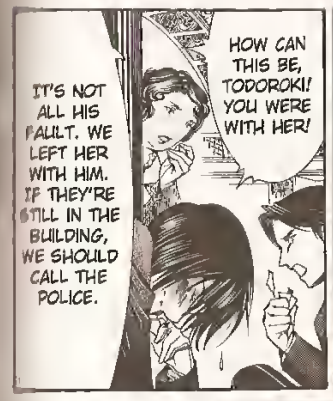
OH, URA! I'M SO GLAD. YOU MUST HAVE BEEN SO SCARED.
WAAH! I WAS SO SCARED! B-BUT TODOROKI... SOB... EXCHANGED ME FOR THE PACKAGE AND SAVED ME!
HUG


REALLY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

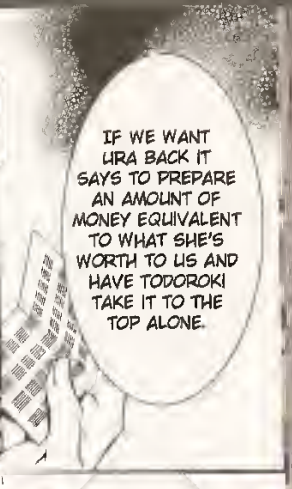
THANK YOU, TODOROKI. THANK YOU...

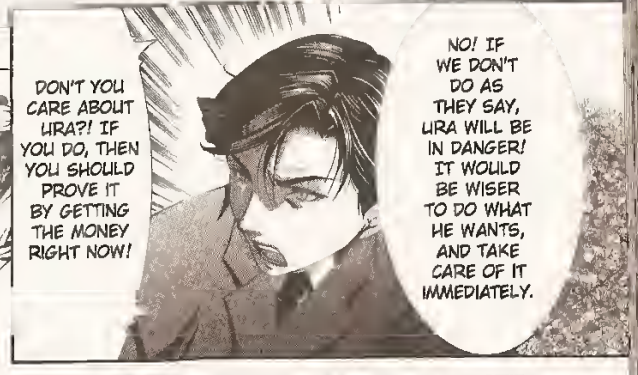
URA, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I'M FINE. I'M GOING TO SEE TODOROKI OFF!

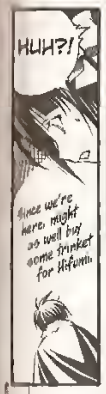
WWW


IT'S NOT ALL HIS FAULT. WE LEFT HER WITH HIM. IF THEY'RE STILL IN THE BUILDING, WE SHOULD CALL THE POLICE.
HOW CAN THIS BE, TODOROKI! YOU WERE WITH HER!

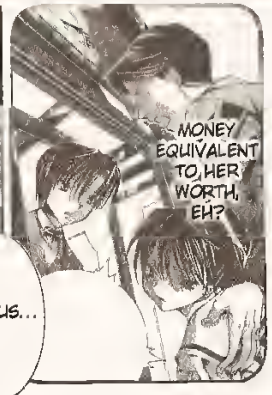
Y-YES...
SO THIS MAN SNATCHED HER IN FRONT OF ALL OF YOU.


IF WE WANT URA BACK IT SAYS TO PREPARE AN AMOUNT OF MONEY EQUIVALENT TO WHAT SHE'S WORTH TO US AND HAVE TODOROKI TAKE IT TO THE TOP ALONE.


DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT URA?! IF YOU DO, THEN YOU SHOULD PROVE IT BY GETTING THE MONEY RIGHT NOW!
NO! IF WE DON'T DO AS THEY SAY, URA WILL BE IN DANGER! IT WOULD BE WISER TO DO WHAT HE WANTS, AND TAKE CARE OF IT IMMEDIATELY.


HUH?!
Since we're here, might as well buy some trinket for Hifumi.

EVERY-THING IS A CULMINATION OF WHAT HAPPENED ON THE FOURTH FLOOR... WHATEVER WAS INSIDE THE GIRL'S MIND. LET'S GO HOME. WE DON'T NEED TO SEE ANYMORE.
Oh my... HOW HORRIBLE...
GENIUS...


MONEY EQUIVALENT TO HER WORTH, EH?

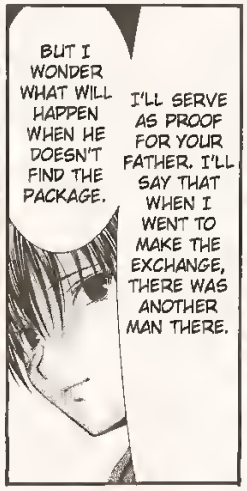
IT WAS HARD WORK.
I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT IT THAT I STARTED TO DREAM ABOUT IT. I EVEN WENT TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE AND PLAYED A PART, SO THAT THE BAKU WOULD COME WITH ME.

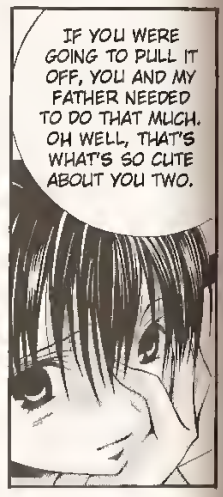
RIGHT, THERE WEREN'T ANY OTHER PASSENGERS THEN...
THE BOY AND GIRL WHO WERE IN THE ELEVATOR WITH US?

SIGH
MY MOTHER KNOWS HOW MUCH I CARE FOR YOU AND WOULD THINK I WAS COVERING FOR YOU, SO WE NEEDED SOME PEOPLE WHO WEREN'T INVOLVED.

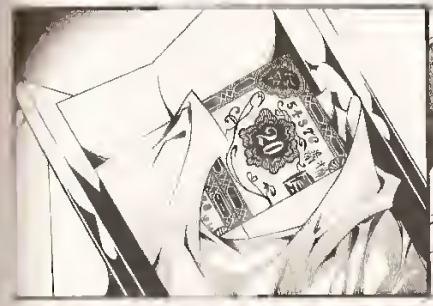
HE'LL BEAR IT IN SILENCE. IF MOTHER EVER FOUND OUT, SHE WOULD LEAVE HIM. HE WOULD BE RUINED.

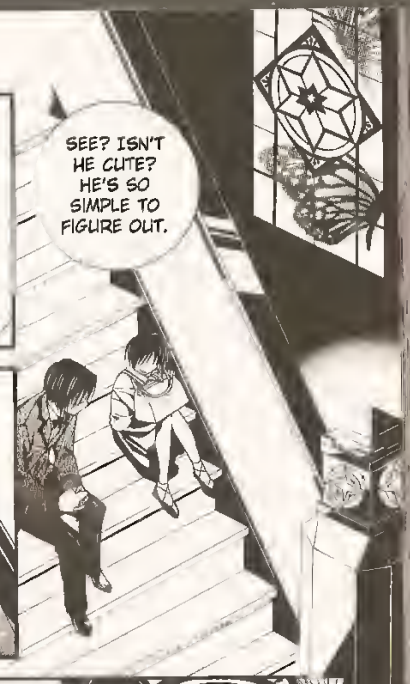
REALLY?


BUT I WONDER WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN HE DOESN'T FIND THE PACKAGE.
I'LL SERVE AS PROOF FOR YOUR FATHER. I'LL SAY THAT WHEN I WENT TO MAKE THE EXCHANGE, THERE WAS ANOTHER MAN THERE.


IF YOU WERE GOING TO PULL IT OFF, YOU AND MY FATHER NEEDED TO DO THAT MUCH. OH WELL, THAT'S WHAT'S SO CUTE ABOUT YOU TWO.

BUT BECAUSE OF THAT, THIS IS NOW ALL YOURS.
I'VE SEEN MY FATHER PRACTICE RUNNING UP THE STAIRS.

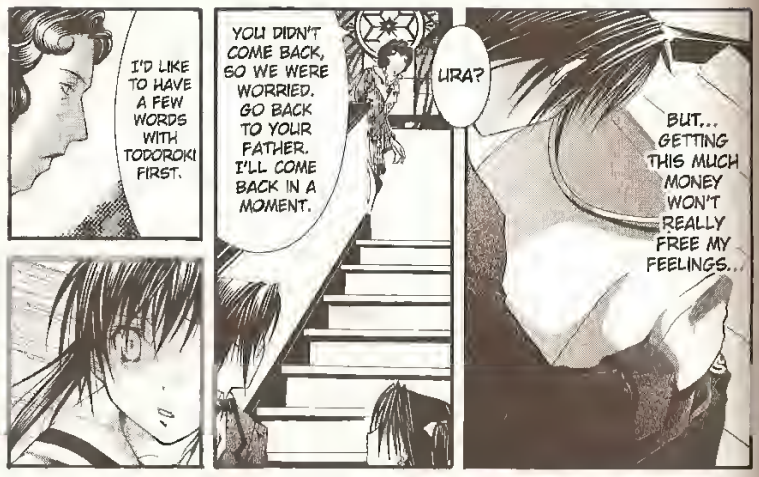


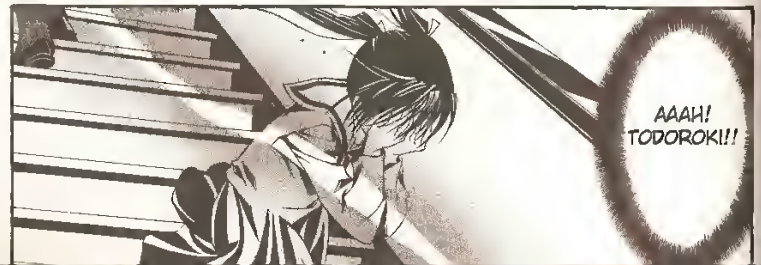

SEE? ISN'T HE CUTE? HE'S SO SIMPLE TO FIGURE OUT.

YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN SUSPECTED OF CREATING THE WHOLE PLOT WHICH IS WHY I BROUGHT WITNESSES WITH ME
BUT WHEN YOU CAME TO SAVE ME I SECRETLY TOOK THE PACKAGE THAT HAD THE RANSOM MONEY. MOTHER IS SURE TO CALL THE POLICE.

FATHER WILL BE VERY DISAPPOINTED THAT THE MONEY IS GONE.

HE PRETENDED TO BE THE KIDNAPPER AND TIED ME UP IN A HIDDEN LOCATION.
HE DIDN'T REALIZE THAT I KNEW WHAT HE WAS PLOTTING WITH YOU.

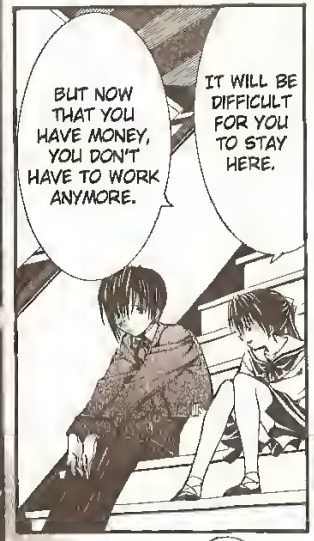

I'D LIKE TO HAVE A FEW WORDS WITH TODOROKI FIRST.
YOU DIDN'T COME BACK, SO WE WERE WORRIED. GO BACK TO YOUR FATHER. I'LL COME BACK IN A MOMENT.
URA?
BUT... GETTING THIS MUCH MONEY WON'T REALLY FREE MY FEELINGS...



I'M FREE...?

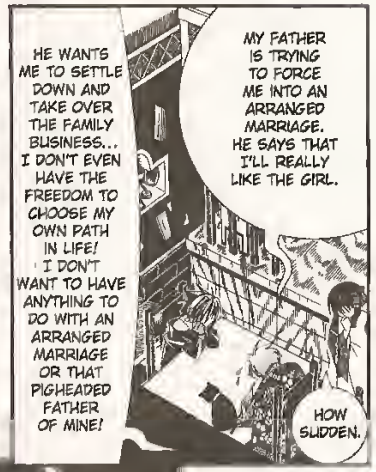
DID IT SEEM AS IF I WEREN'T FREE?

I *LIKE* BEING AN ELEVATOR BOY.



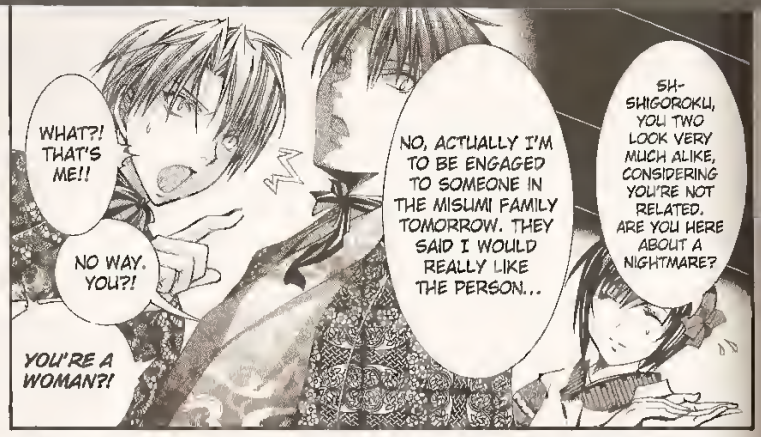
IF I STAY IN THE ELEVATOR, I CAN BE SURE OF SEEING YOU...
...AND FOR THAT MOMENT, THAT ENCLOSURE IS FULL OF SUCH IRREPLACEABLE SWEETNESS.
THAT'S RIGHT. YET YOU RETURNED THE MONEY. YOUR LOYALTY IS APPRECIATED.
DON'T TALK ABOUT IT LIKE IT'S MERE LOYALTY!
FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART, I THINK ONLY OF YOU, MADAM...
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU EVERY DAY IN THE ELEVATOR.
THIS IS YOURS, MADAM.
HEE HEE... THAT'S A LOT OF MONEY. WHY DON'T YOU RUN AWAY WITH IT?
WHAT I WANT CAN'T BE MEASURED BY MONEY.
...!
EVER SINCE I TOLD YOU ABOUT YOUR HUSBAND'S PLAN, YOU'VE NOT SAID A WORD. YOU ENJOYED WATCHING IT PLAY OUT.
YOU WERE TESTING ME, RIGHT?

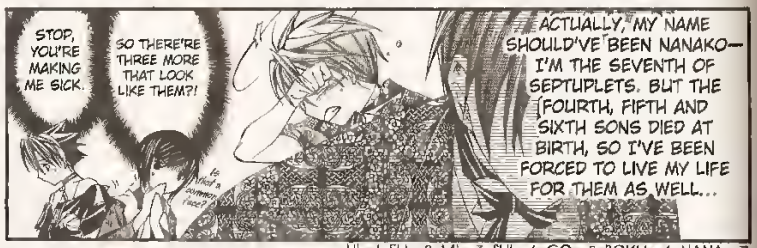
The Fifty-Sixth Night: Hifumi & Shigoroku


MY FATHER IS TRYING TO FORCE ME INTO AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE. HE SAYS THAT I'LL REALLY LIKE THE GIRL.
HOW SUDDEN.
HE WANTS ME TO SETTLE DOWN AND TAKE OVER THE FAMILY BUSINESS... I DON'T EVEN HAVE THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE MY OWN PATH IN LIFE! I DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE OR THAT PIGHEADED FATHER OF MINE!

SLEEVES HAPPY

HA HA! AS IF I WOULD SACRIFICE THAT FOR MONEY...
AS LONG AS YOU POSSESS MY HEART, MY BODY IS TRAPPED IN THIS ELEVATOR...
...AND I CAN NEVER BE FREE...


WHAT?! THAT'S ME!!
NO WAY. YOU?!
YOU'RE A WOMAN?!
NO, ACTUALLY I'M TO BE ENGAGED TO SOMEONE IN THE MISUMI FAMILY TOMORROW. THEY SAID I WOULD REALLY LIKE THE PERSON...
SH-SHIGOROKU, YOU TWO LOOK VERY MUCH ALIKE, CONSIDERING YOU'RE NOT RELATED. ARE YOU HERE ABOUT A NIGHTMARE?


STOP, YOU'RE MAKING ME SICK.
SO THERE'RE THREE MORE THAT LOOK LIKE THEM?!
ACTUALLY, MY NAME SHOULD'VE BEEN NANAKO— I'M THE SEVENTH OF SEPTUPLETS. BUT THE FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH SONS DIED AT BIRTH, SO I'VE BEEN FORCED TO LIVE MY LIFE FOR THEM AS WELL...

HI = 1, FU = 2, MI = 3, SHI = 4, GO = 5, ROKU = 6, NANA = 7

AND YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY EXCITING FOR ME EITHER. IF I'M GOING TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE WITH SOMEONE, THEN I WANT IT TO BE WITH SOMEONE EXTRAORDINARY. SOMEONE LIKE A BAKU.
WELL, I DO FEEL THAT THERE IS SOME FATE THAT LINKS US, BUT I'VE ALREADY GIVEN MY HEART TO MIZUKI.

Sleep now... Leave these idiots behind.
I'M SHIGOROKU ROKKAKU. THE PLEASURE'S MINE, YOU HANDSOME MAN!
WHAT WONDERFUL CLOTHES YOU'RE WEARING! I'M HIFUMI MISUMI. NICE TO MEET YOU.
HEE HEE

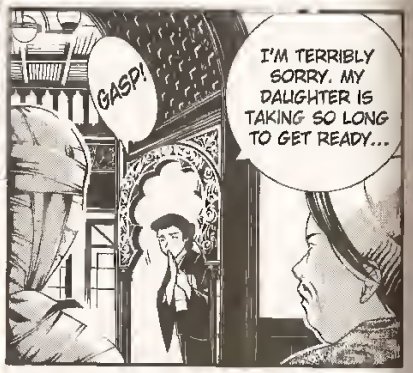
THE NEXT DAY...
I SEE. WE'LL MAKE SUCH A HORRIBLE FIRST IMPRESSION THAT THEY'LL WANT TO CANCEL THE ENGAGEMENT!
WHAT?! I'M GOING TO FOLLOW HIM! I CAN'T GO THROUGH WITH THIS ENGAGEMENT WHEN WE MEET OUR FAMILIES TOMORROW. LET'S WEAR ATTIRE SO BIZARRE IT'LL REVOLT THEM
I KNOW. ISN'T IT PERFECTLY BIZARRE? I SPENT A LOT OF EFFORT MAKING IT. EVERYONE WILL BE SURPRISED.
HIRUKO, I'M RELYING ON YOU...
OF COURSE I CAN!
BUT THESE CLOTHES CAN'T BE SEEN BY IDIOTS. YOU'RE SMART SO YOU CAN SEE THEM, RIGHT?
THUD
OH, HE WENT BY CAR? WILL HE BE ALL RIGHT IN THAT STATE OF MIND?
VROOM
OKAY, I'M GOING.

SO WHICH WOULD YOU PREFER?
HUH?
HUH? REALLY?!
OH, SURE. WHY NOT? I DID IT ONCE JUST FOR FUN ABOUT A CENTURY AGO.
YOU WANT TO MARRY ME?
PLEASE, NO MORE!
I'M SCARED!
I DON'T WANT TO SLEEP!
TO BE A BREEDING GROUND FOR NIGHTMARES OR SOMEONE WHO TAKES CARE OF THE BREEDERS?
BUT HE'S CONNIVING AND VULGAR. AND ON TOP OF THAT...
IF YOU LIKE BAKUS, THERE'S A GUY AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE
...HE'S DEPRESSING, SHORT-TEMPERED, STUPID, CHUBBY AND BALD, SO HE SAID. HE ASKED IF I WAS OKAY WITH THAT.
TSUKI-SHIRO!
H-HE WENT TO AMERICA!!
THAT'S HER IDEAL?!
HOWEVER, I DON'T SEE SUCH AN IDEAL MAN LIKE THAT HERE. HAS HE MOVED OUT?
HELP
Like that woman that went crazy. I ended up having to cultivate the dream myself.
You have to feed them and talk to them or else they go crazy and rot.
NEVER MIND... YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND WHAT MARRIAGE IS.

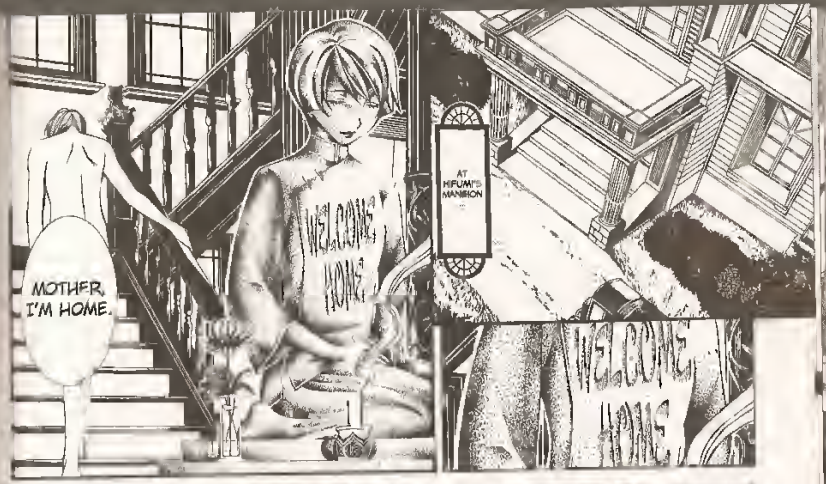
HUH?! THAT NOISE!
NO, NOT REALLY...
BLUE
HIFU—! I MEAN, BLUE! CAN YOU FEEL IT TOO? THIS POWER?
YOU KNOW, I WAS THINKING... I GET THE FEELING YOU SHOULD'VE LIVED IN ANOTHER TIME PERIOD, YOU KNOW?
It's like we're from different eras.
FEED ME NIGHT-MARES! WHERE ARE THE NIGHT-MARES!
IT'S THE MAGICAL BEAST HIRUGON !!
AH! AND OVER THERE ...
OH! YELLOW SHIMA.
I'LL HELP!
ARGH! I HATE MYSELF FOR BEING JEALOUS OF SOMEONE HAVING SUCH A GREAT FANTASY
WH-WHY?! WE WERE COMRADES... WHY DID YOU BETRAY ME...?
BANG
IT'S PINK AZUS—
WONDERFUL! THIS DEEP RED GARMENT... IT'S...
I KNEW IT! HE'S HAVING A FANTASY...
...CAUSING A MYSTERIOUS POWER TO SURGE THROUGH MY BODY!
TEE HEE... I'M ALIVE. EVERY HUNDRED YEARS MY FLOWER BLOOMS WHEN I COME IN CONTACT WITH THE UNDERWORLD.
Waah! My Bummer!!
KAIRI?! ARE YOU ALIVE?!
AGH!
BY THE WAY, YOUR APPEAR-ANCE...
TH-THESE ARE SPECIAL CLOTHES THAT IDIOTS CAN'T SEE.
I SUPPOSE... THANKFULLY, HIRUKO MADE HUNDREDS OF EXTRAS. ARE YOU ABLE TO SEE THEM?
WHAT? YOU WANT TO TRY THEM ON?
DON'T HAVE SOME STRANGE FANTASY, ALL RIGHT?
SPECIAL... OF COURSE I CAN SEE THEM.

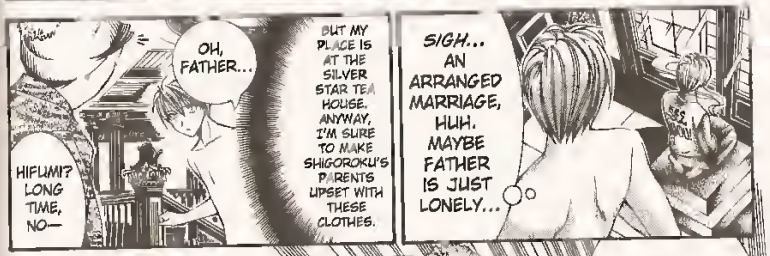
I'M SHIGOROKU ROKKAKU.
SHIGOROKU, I WISH YOU WOULDN'T.

MADAME ROKKAKU IS HERE.
MY CLOTHES... WHAT A WASTE.


GASP!
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY. MY DAUGHTER IS TAKING SO LONG TO GET READY...

HUH?! IS IT GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN?
WHAT IS THIS?! HOW INSULTING! I HAD BEEN ASSURED THAT THERE WAS A RICH YOUNG MAN WHO LOOKED JUST LIKE MY DAUGHTER— SOMEONE MY STUBBORN DAUGHTER WOULD NOT FAIL TO LIKE. I CANNOT LET THIS ENGAGEMENT PROCEED!
MY PRECIOUS DAUGHTER IS NOBLE AND FULL OF INTELLIGENCE...
PARDON ME.

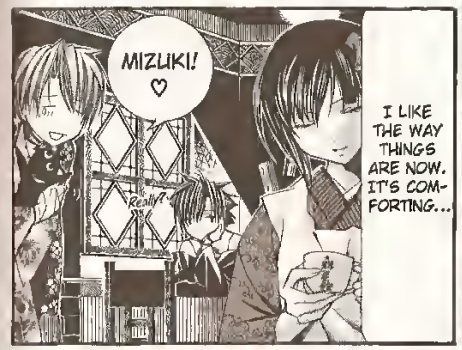

AT HIFUMI'S MANSION
WELCOME HOME
MOTHER, I'M HOME.

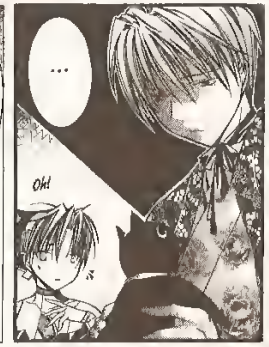

HIFUMI? LONG TIME, NO—
OH, FATHER...
BUT MY PLACE IS AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE. ANYWAY, I'M SURE TO MAKE SHIGOROKU'S PARENTS UPSET WITH THESE CLOTHES.
SIGH... AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE, HUH. MAYBE FATHER IS JUST LONELY...

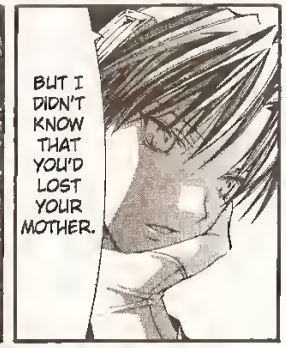
WHAT?! WELL OF COURSE I CAN SEE THEM! DON'T TAKE ME FOR AN IDIOT!
NO! THESE ARE SPECIAL CLOTHES THAT IDIOTS CAN'T SEE!
THUD
ROLL
ROLL
CRASH
WHACK
AT LEAST PUT ON SOME CLOTHES! THINK OF ME, YOUR POOR PARENT! YOU WORTHLESS IDIOT OF A SON!

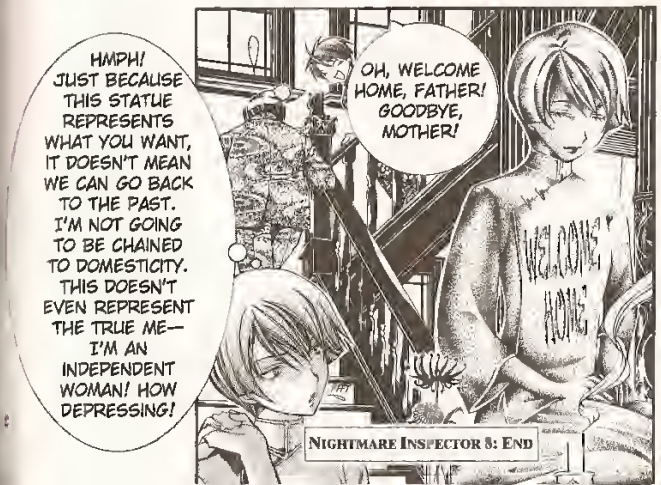
I WANT TO HEAR THE SOUNDS OF PEOPLE COMING AND GOING...
IF ONLY IN ONE SMALL CORNER OF THIS LARGE MANSION...
WELCOME HOME!
I JUST...
THEN WHY AN ENGAGEMENT ALL OF A SUDDEN?
I JUST WANTED TO HEAR THE VOICES OF A FAMILY AGAIN...
BUT... FATHER!
SO HE IS LONELY. B... BUT MY PLACE IS AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE...
FATHER ...
WH-WHAT THE—?! HOW DARE YOU INSULT ONE'S FATHER! Though it's all true...
I FOUND HIM! HE'S DEPRESSING, SHORT-TEMPERED, STUPID, CHUBBY AND BALD!
STUPID GIRL...
AAAGH! DON'T EMBRACE ME WITH A FACE LIKE MY SON'S!
YOU MAY NOT BE A BAKU, BUT YOU'RE MY IDEAL MAN!!
WELL, THAT'S FINE BY ME. NOW I CAN GO BACK TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE WITHOUT ANY WORRIES.
I'LL BE YOUR DAUGHTER! YOU CAN ADOPT ME!
GASP
HEY! THAT OUTFIT ...!
SO, DAD, THAT MEANS I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE OVER THE FAMILY BUSINESS! THERE'S SOMEONE I'VE ALREADY GIVEN MY HEART TO! I WON'T COME HOME!
What a strange son you have... I feel for you.
OH, I REALLY DO FEEL LIKE FATE LINKS US! ♡ HERE'S AN IDEA! LET'S NOT GET MARRIED, BUT JUST STAY ENGAGED FOREVER! ♡
HEH HEH... MY BUSINESS ONLY EXISTS TO BE RUINED BY MY OWN HANDS. IT WILL GROW AND GROW, AND THEN BE DESTROYED IN AN INSTANT. I'LL LEAVE YOU A GIFT OF DEBTS TO TEST YOU... I WANT YOU TO BE STRONG!
Whaat! Then I'm definitely going to take over the business someday!
WHEN DID I EVER TELL YOU TO TAKE OVER THE BUSINESS?
WHAT? THEN..!
I NEVER PLANNED ON RESTRICTING MY BELOVED SON.

あとがき AFTERWORD








HMPH! JUST BECAUSE THIS STATUE REPRESENTS WHAT YOU WANT, IT DOESN'T MEAN WE CAN GO BACK TO THE PAST. I'M NOT GOING TO BE CHAINED TO DOMESTICITY. THIS DOESN'T EVEN REPRESENT THE TRUE ME— I'M AN INDEPENDENT WOMAN! HOW DEPRESSING!
OH, WELCOME HOME, FATHER! GOODBYE, MOTHER!
WELCOME HOME
NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR 8: END

※ LIVING SEPARATE LIVES UNDER THE SAME ROOF

感謝 THANK YOU!

◆ My special friends & assistants:
Wan Wan Shiroi
NEEMA

◆ My lovely assistants:
Katsumi Arai
MOA!
N-san
(for help with dialects)

◆ A big thank you to:
My editor Yuki Saeki
Editor-in-chief
Everyone that was involved with making this book
<Everyone at Square Enix>

Thank you very much for all your help over the years. The next few pages are the usual guest pages by Shiroi. It's an alternate retelling of the manga that may or may not be a continuation from volume 6's "Akihabara Boy"—

Katsumi Arai is an assistant who has been working with me for a while. Katsumi is young, but has strange interests, so I'm always curiously observing her! Thank you for the wonderful Hiruko who looks like he's either going to pick a fight or pick up a guitar.

Mashiba

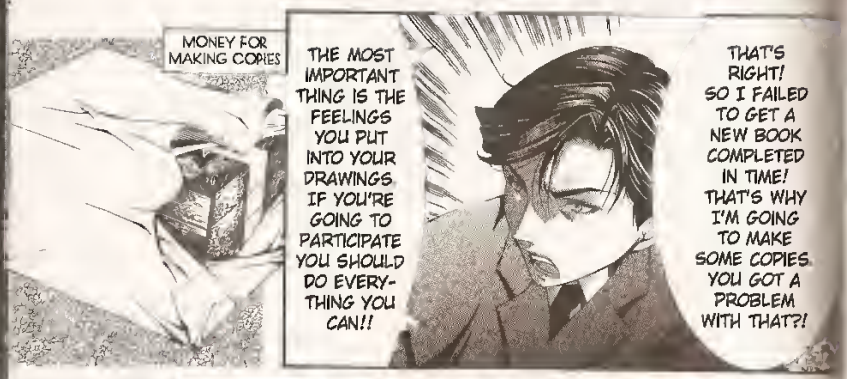
It's been quite a few years since that first day when I came carrying a stuffed panda bear. I've been an assistant since the second volume. Other than the assistant friends, I've been around the longest! (laughs) Is this volume 8 already? That's amazing! Congratulations! Time is really flying by...I swear. I'm so glad that I could be involved with Nightmare Inspector for so long. I look forward to more!

Katsumi Arai
(Freelance Assistant #11)

後書キ AFTER-WORD

Hello, Shin Mashiba here! Thanks for supporting this series this far! The next volume will be the last, so please look out for it.

PS.
My assistants and I refer to Tsukishiro as the "Substitute." His true appearance has wavy blond hair, a butterfly mask and an aquiline nose. Or at least that's what Shiroi says.


MONEY FOR MAKING COPIES
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THE FEELINGS YOU PUT INTO YOUR DRAWINGS IF YOU'RE GOING TO PARTICIPATE YOU SHOULD DO EVERY-THING YOU CAN!!
THAT'S RIGHT! SO I FAILED TO GET A NEW BOOK COMPLETED IN TIME! THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO MAKE SOME COPIES. YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?!

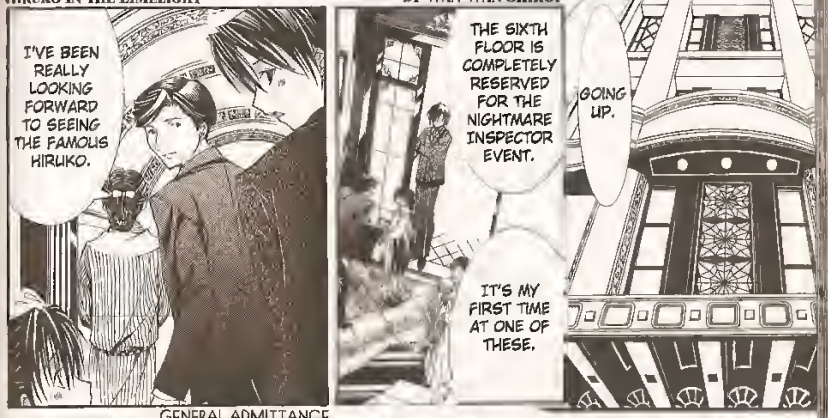
HUH?!
Since we're here, might as well buy some trinket for Hifumi
IT DOESN'T DO ANY GOOD TO BRING ALL THAT MONEY. THIS ISN'T A COPY CENTER. THE PHOTO-COPIERS HERE ONLY TAKE COINS...
Oh my...
HOW HORRIBLE ...
GENIUS...
MONEY EQUIVALENT TO HER WORTH, EH?

THERE'S SOME EXTRA SPACE LEFT, SO PLEASE USE IT AS A NOTE PAD.
YOU CAN WRITE DOWN WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND AND THEN LEND *NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR* TO A FRIEND!

MEMO

The One Hundred Million, Five Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Night: Hiruko in the Limelight

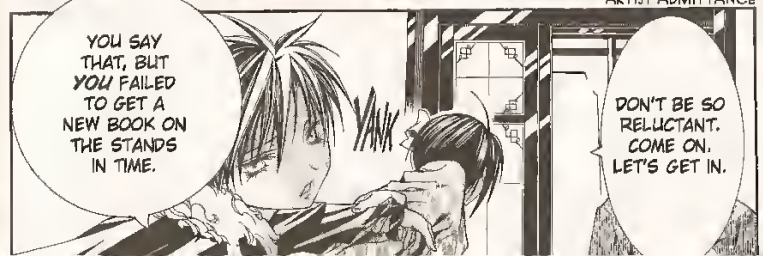
by Wan Wan Shiroi


I'VE BEEN REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE FAMOUS HIRUKO.
THE SIXTH FLOOR IS COMPLETELY RESERVED FOR THE NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR EVENT.
IT'S MY FIRST TIME AT ONE OF THESE.
GOING UP.

GENERAL ADMITTANCE

YOU EVEN AGREED TO DRAW IN PEOPLE'S SKETCHBOOKS IF THEY ASKED YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? YOU STAYED UP ALL NIGHT GETTING YOUR MANGA READY FOR THIS DAY!
THAT PERSON
OH. I WONDER IF THAT PERSON'S GOING TO MAKE COPIES OF THEIR BOOK.
WHAT A PAIN. I'M TIRED...

ARTIST ADMITTANCE

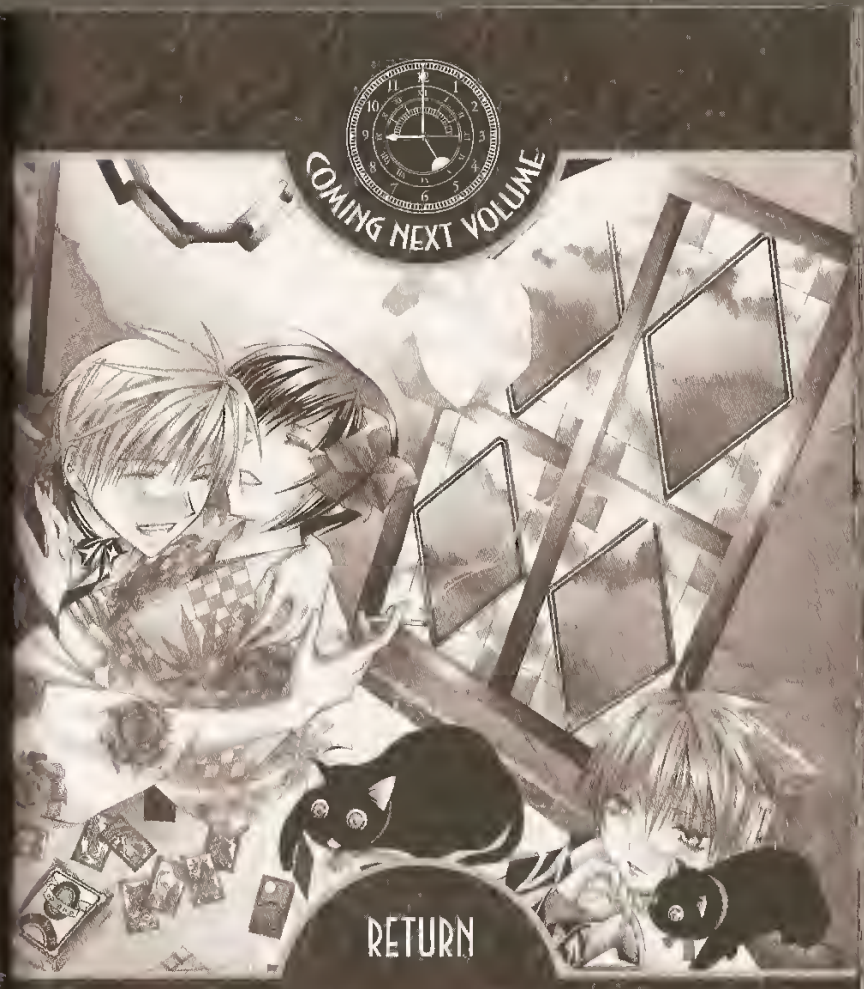


SHIN MASHIBA

The white cat's name is probably Niamu.

"Niamu" means "Like a dream."
-Editor

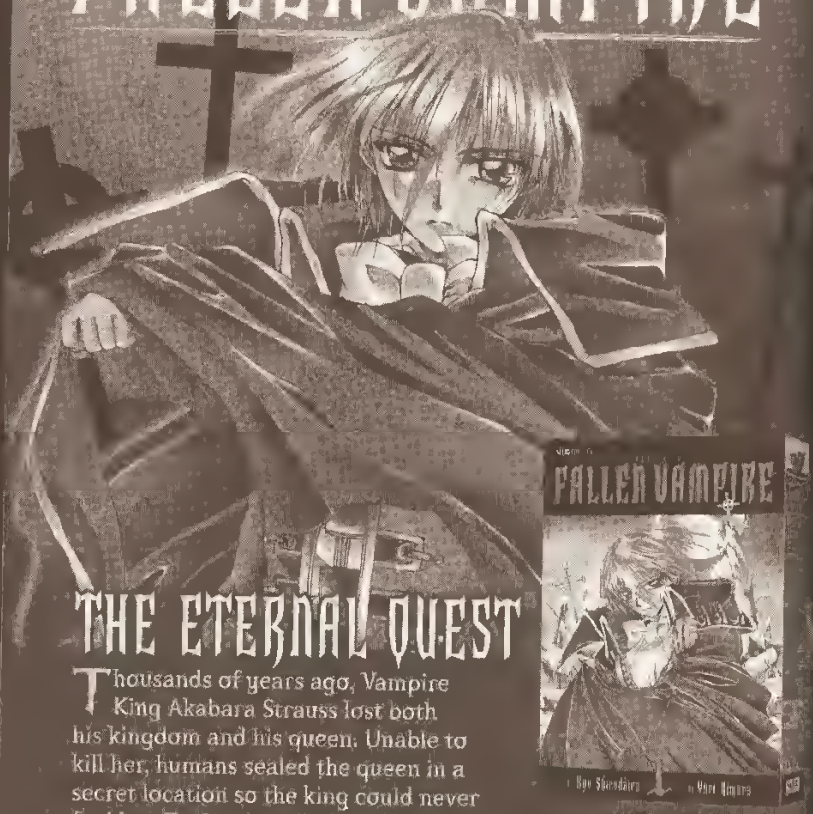
Shin Mashiba's first manga, *Yumekui Kenbun* (Nightmare Inspector), premiered in *Monthly Stencil*, a shojo magazine, in December 2001 and was then serialized in *Monthly G Fantasy* from 2003 to 2007. Mashiba-san's own nightmares include being forced to eat 50 living slugs and being chased by time.



Dreams on the menu in this volume: a different perspective on Chitose's past, Azusa's return as a Baku, a dream so horrible it corrupts all other dreams, and the final dream where only one Baku can survive the truth...

AVAILABLE AUGUST 2009!

THE RECORD OF A
FALLEN VAMPIRE



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YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

YUMEKUI KENBUN: NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR
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